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CHRISTIAN MORALITY;

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A

SERIES OF DISCOURSES

ON THE

DECALOGUE.

BY JOHN W. CHICKERING,
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TO THE

HIGH-STREET CONGREGATION,

PORTLAND, ME.,

THESE DISCOURSES,

ORIGINALLY PREPARED FOR THEIR BENEFIT,

AND NOW PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR PASTOR.

PREFACE.

It is a common and ingenious device of the Enemy of God and man, to dissociate piety and morality. When, either in the views, or in the practice, of any community, such a separation takes place, the consequences are most disastrous. Nor is the evil diminished by the fact, that piety and morality are, in truth, inseparable. Indeed it would be difficult to say, whether piety without morality, or morality without piety, involves the greater perversion of terms, and the greater injury to the Church of God.

Is there no danger that in our just dread of the latter,—a danger which the practical ten-

dencies, and the unreflecting habits of the times may well awaken,—we should guard with too little care against the former? While CONTEMPLATION is becoming more and more unfashionable, and its place poorly supplied by incessant ACTION,—the watchword of the day,—have we no cause to fear that MORALITY will be postponed to both, and that the grace of a pure and holy life, even in the Church, will languish?

So, at least, it has seemed to me. And I confess the pleasure with which I learned that these discourses, of all my recent public ministrations, had awakened an interest so deep among all classes of my hearers, as to demand their publication.

That demand, with whatever reluctance, and even serious inconvenience, on account of ill health, it has been complied with, I did not feel at liberty to resist.

In such a light do I view the claims of Christian morality upon the Church of God, and such evils, both past and imminent, are

seen even within her sacred enclosures,—evils both to herself and to the world whose light she ought to be,—from neglect, both as to instruction and practice, concerning these great matters of right doing, as the fruit and evidence of right feeling, that I was quite willing to present my church and congregation, if they desired, some such offering, and, through them, the christian community at large, with this, rather than any other portion of my public discourses.

When I reflect upon the vast amount of doctrinal discussion respecting the great point of evangelical faith, which the various errors of the age have called forth, I cannot doubt that the time has come for more full instruction, and more frequent exhortation, concerning the equally "weighty matters of the Law."

An evil day will it be for the cause of evangelical truth, when its adherents shall be *truly* charged with having a less strict regard for morality, than those who substitute it in the place of piety. All things "pure, and lovely, and of good report," should abound in the lives

of those who profess to be joined to Christ. There ought to be no just ground of unfavorable comparison, or of saying, "what do ye more than others," against those who see in the sufferings of the incarnate WORD, a vicarious endurance for their transgressions.

To this end, it is needful that the church should have "line upon line, precept upon precept;" and that all the branches of christian morality, even down to those "minor moralities of life," which are rather the ornaments than the elements of a "godly conversation," should receive timely attention both from the Pulpit and from the Press.

It is not so much in the hope of supplying the lack of books on these subjects, among the numerous publications of the present day, as of turning attention towards that deficiency and its probable consequences, that this volume is sent forth. It comprises, necessarily, only an outline of Christian morality. Not a series of *sermons* only, but of *volumes*, is needed to do justice to the subject, and to be a guide to the con-

science and the practice both of the Church and the world. It were much to be desired that the suggestion respecting an extended treatise on the eighth commandment, which will be found at page 193 of this volume should be noticed and followed by some competent writer. The same remark will apply to several of the other commandments.

In saying further, that these discourses were hastily prepared, and delivered in the ordinary course of pulpit labor, on an equal number of successive Sabbaths, without the remotest thought of publication, it is not intended to shield them from criticism, or to apologize for their literary imperfection. When a writer voluntarily appears as an author, he assumes not only the labors, but the responsibilities, of authorship ; and he has no claims to exemption from that criticism, which he might have avoided by the simple expedient of keeping his manuscript to himself.

These Sermons retain their original form, their variety in the mode of discussion, their personal

addresses, and most of their local allusions. Had it been otherwise, they would have failed to meet the wishes of those, whose kind and urgent request has led to their publication. They desired to read what they had been interested in hearing; and not something else, so modified as to have lost its identity with their recollections. The discourses, therefore, are presented to the public as originally delivered, with such slight revision as the haste in which they were written rendered necessary.

The closing sermon, following those upon the commandments, sufficiently explains the reason for its insertion according to the request of the hearers. The Law and the Gospel should never be far asunder in the thoughts of the Christian or in the instructions of the sanctuary. Indeed, whatever the Law may do *in this life*, even for those who have broken it, by restraining them from the lengths to which they might go in transgression it is plain that it is only as "our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ" that it can do us any good for the life which is to

come. To preach the Law without the Gospel, is a thankless and useless task. Together, they furnish a noble theme, worthy of the beneficial results which God has connected with their due and proper presentation.

If the volume should be honored, by the Great Head of the Church as a humble instrument in promoting that obedience to the Law, and that faith in the Gospel, which together form the Christian character and lay the foundation of the Christian hope, it will gratify the highest wishes of

THE AUTHOR.

Portland, September, 1839.

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SERMON I.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20: 3.

THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.

This is the first commandment. As I have lately discoursed upon the nature of Christian morality in general, I now propose to specify the various duties it includes, as brought to view in the decalogue. The present discourse, therefore, is the first of a series, which may be expected at convenient intervals, on each of the ten Commandments, in their order.

The history of this early and comprehensive statute book is familiar to you all. It was first engraven upon stone, by which mode of publication,—a species of lithography in a moral as well as literal sense,—was set forth the eternal

and unchangeable nature of the divine commands.

Nor was this all. When Moses, in his holy indignation, excited by the strange idolatry of the Israelitish multitude, had thrown down and destroyed the original copy of this heavenly imprint, God commanded him to prepare other tables of stone, like unto the first, saying, "I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest." The precise amount of that whole memorable revelation upon Sinai, which God saw fit in this formal and reiterated manner to perpetuate, is made known to us in a succeeding passage, where we are told, that "He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the TEN COMMANDMENTS."

These, then, as separate from the rules that followed them and related chiefly to the externals of the Jewish religion, are to be regarded as the grand outline of Jehovah's moral requisitions. They form what is commonly styled the Moral Law, in distinction from the ceremonial law, which last, though it was so strongly binding upon those to whom it was given, that their transgression of it was deemed by God a high and punishable immorality, was yet temporary and in a sense arbitrary, not

entering into the details, nor founded directly and necessarily upon the basis, of the great eternal principles of moral rectitude. They were matters of duty with the Jews only, because God commanded them; though He had great moral reasons unrevealed, like royal reasons of state, for ordaining them. Not so with the Ten Commandments. They are mere iterations or copies of the law of conscience, as the fifth, the sixth, and the ninth, or like the second and the fourth, have an intimate connexion with the rendering of spiritual service to the Great Object of religious worship.

Such is the Decalogue; wonderful and interesting in every point of view; as a fragment of antiquity; as the first record of the legislation of the Great Legislator; as comprehending all morality; and as showing every reflecting man that he must plead guilty to the charge of having in more ways than one disobeyed his Maker. A young person was once heard to say, that whatever else she had done that was wrong, she had certainly never broken any of the Ten Commandments. Perhaps, with a full and spiritual understanding even of the First, we may find reason to be more cautious in our self-justification.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." This English phrase might mean that no other gods should be held in higher estimation; requiring only that Jehovah should be supreme. But the original word rendered "before," simply refers to Jehovah's universal presence and inspection. Mark, too, the mode of address. The singular number is used, It is not "ye," but "thou," directed to each hearer and reader individually, as though he were alone in the world; "THOU shalt never insult ME by having any pretended deity in my sight as an object of thy reverence." Let us hear God thus personally addressing us, not only in this, but in all the Commandments.

The first commandment is not directed against idolatry, strictly so called, that is, the use of images or other visible forms as objects or instruments of worship. For as the true God might be worshipped through those forbidden idols or other forms, so the first commandment may be broken without the use of any such instruments of devotion, and even without the formal adoption by name or otherwise of any false divinity as an object of religious homage.

It would hardly be the most profitable mode of treating this subject, to entertain you,—and the history is certainly not uninteresting, though painful,—with an account of the false theology of the world. "Lords many and gods many" have indeed had dominion, nominally, and in a sense really, over this world which Jehovah created and of which He is Sovereign Ruler.

But we must first settle the question what it is to have other gods than Jehovah; in other words, in what way men, whether heathens, or dwellers in Christendom, are in danger of breaking the first commandment. The celebrated invocation of the Poet,

> Father of all! in every age,
> In every clime adored,
> By saint, by savage, and by sage,
> Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,

implies that all who recognize any divinity, under whatever name, and possessed of whatever character, do in fact render allegiance to the Creator and Ruler of the universe.

But is this true? I readily admit that the mere name of his divinity is nothing, either for or against the claims of a man to be considered a worshipper of the true God. It is nothing in our favor, if ours is an imaginary deity of a to-

tally different character from the scripture character of God, that we call him by the scripture name. It would be nothing against the Pagan who should reverence and obey the true God so far as the light of nature had revealed his character and his will, that he applied to him some unauthorized designation.

But was the Jove of the ancients, or is any one of the legion-named divinities of the modern pagans, the true and universal Lord? Is the being whom any of them ignorantly worship, the nearest possible approximation, with the light they have, to the scripture portraiture of the great God, holy, wise, just and good? Far, far from it; as I need not take pains to show. The researches of modern philanthropy, together with the records of ancient mythology, have not left it doubtful that the gods of the heathen are literally, as the Bible assures us, "vanity and a lie." It is known to almost every child, that many of them rather resemble demons than divinities; and that in the Jupiter, and Venus, and Bacchus, and Mercury, to whom the most splendid temples of antiquity were dedicated, and whose names are interwoven with the most imperishable literature the world has ever seen, we find impersonated and deified

the meanest and most malignant passions of the human heart. So that even the heathens are without excuse, because when they knew God, that is, might have known Him by the light of nature, they glorified Him not as God. They had "other gods before Him." Let it be distinctly understood then, that when we charge the pagan world, both ancient and modern, with being worshippers of false gods, we do not mean merely that they use a different name from the Bible name, nor merely that they have more gods than one,—for I think we can imagine an unenlightened mind to have a view of the true God under various names, corresponding with his various attributes, not amounting to polytheism in its worst sense,—but we charge them with worshipping a different being from the true God, different, too, as to those points of character, which the light within would have made clear to their minds, if they had used that light to the best of their ability. It was on this account that the apostle declared them to be without excuse.

But there is yet another question. What *is* a god? What must we think, or feel, or do, in order to a recognition of any divinity, whether true or false? I answer, a god is something

more than a creator. We might call our creator by a certain name, and invest him with certain attributes, and those very exalted ones, and yet he might not be our god. For we might suppose some other being as our preserver, that is, the god of providence,—in which case the first would be at the best only a creating god,—or we might suppose still another to be our moral governor, or we might wholly exclude the idea of a moral government,—in which case we should be in an important sense without any god at all, for creation and providence, mighty works as they are, form but a very small part of the entire office of the Divinity.

Our God then, must be something more than our creator, our preserver, or the architect of the universe. *He* is our God, whom we reverence, love and obey; just as *he* is our king for whom we have feelings and words and acts of allegiance. The banished monarch, whom his enemies called the pretender, was all the while the king of those, who desired his restoration. He occupied the throne of their hearts; and God, we are told, "looketh on the heart." It is here he will have his throne.

While, therefore, it is nothing against the pagan that he has, ignorantly, a wrong name

for his divinity, it is nothing in our favor, necessarily, that we have the right name, or even some of the true attributes of Jehovah on our lips, or in our view, unless He is in truth our GOD, reverenced, loved, worshipped and obeyed as such.

This it is, then, to have other gods before Jehovah: To have other objects, whether they be persons, or things, or fictions of the imagination, as objects of the affection and obedience which we owe to God. We need no other confirmation of such a view, than is furnished by the language of Christ, who in summing up the purport of all the divine statutes, includes this and a few others under the head of loving the Lord our God with all the heart and soul and mind and strength.

And now let us leave the pagan world, and come home to our own firesides, with the honest and humble inquiry, whether in any way, according to the spiritual principle of our Saviour's commentaries upon some of the commandments, we have ever broken this first one. What gods have we in Christendom besides Jehovah? I answer,

I. An imaginary being—rather many imaginary beings—bearing the same name, but dif-

fering, widely and essentially, from the true God. In speaking of the heathen, I have said that the grounds of their inexcusableness as stated by the apostle, are, their not knowing the true God as well as they might by the light they possessed, and their not glorifying him as they were taught by the light within to do.

If the same rule holds true in our case,—and it is so reasonable that I think we shall all admit it to be the only one on which God can be supposed to proceed in estimating our conduct in this matter,—we have only to ask what means of knowing him He has placed within our reach, in order to ascertain to what extent a mistake in our theology is blameworthy.

The reply to this question is very plain. We have *every possible* means of knowing who God is, and what he requires. We have a revelation clothed with such authority, marked with so many tokens of its truth and heavenly origin, as never clustered around any other volume even as to the simple questions of its authorship and general credibility.

This volume, too, in addition to direct assertions concerning the character of Jehovah,—many of them from his own lips and all given by his inspiration,—contains his laws, his deal-

ings with individuals and nations, and to some extent, with angels both fallen and unfallen, many of his plans for the future, and a full, though necessarily a figurative, description of the grand assize which will terminate in a flood of glory his earthly administration. With all this, in addition to that light of nature which of itself rendered the heathen without excuse, does not God justly demand of us, that we should acknowledge, adore and obey him in an intelligent manner, and without confusion or error as the grand leading traits of his character.

Let none imagine that the end of all this argument is to be this: some men in christian lands, break the first commandment, because some men believe in a god different from the One whom the preacher finds revealed to his mind on the pages of inspiration. No, I will draw no such conclusion. I only say, that if you will look abroad upon the face of Christendom, or even of New-England, nay, of any considerable town, or village, you will see cause to conclude that *some men*, among such diverse theology, must have an imaginary god.

The remark of one distinguished man to another of a different faith, "We do not believe in the same God,"—though the language is strong and its spirit liable to be misunder-

stood, was nevertheless true. How can it be otherwise, my hearers, than that men even in Christendom should have different gods, when so many read the Bible to cull from it a support of some preconceived notion, and others do not even take the trouble to read it at all, but argue about what is reasonable and proper for God to be and to do, as if they were discussing the character of an earthly emperor. In the latter case, however, they would be far too wise to make up their opinions independently of an authentic volume in their possession, purporting to be a sketch of the emperor's life and character.

My hearers, let us all be sure that our God—the God whom we think of and reverence, and whose favor we seek to gain—is the God whom the Bible reveals; and not some other being less holy, or less just, or less omniscient, or less unchangeable, whom our imagination has depicted.

II. There is a kind of practical pantheism abroad in the world, in that many reverence and obey public opinion, and make it, so far, their god. Gods many and lords many do indeed have dominion over him who asks continually what will be thought of him, what will

render him popular, or what course the majority of the people follow. But are there none such among ourselves?

My friend, who hast till this time lived in a full belief of the duty and necessity of personal piety, and yet hast neglected the whole subject as if it only belonged to another race of beings, art thou well assured, that here has not been the main secret of thy irreligious life, and that here will not be the secret,—which may Heaven forbid!—of thy death without Christ, and of thy joyless eternity? Oh, the fear of man which bringeth a snare, how strong is its snare, how many are its victims.

But he who fears and obeys man rather than God, has he no other gods before Jehovah? To what purpose is it that he knows the name or even the attributes of the true God, if he deliberately neglects His well known commands, through fear of public opinion, or because some one individual will be foolish enough to despise him, or wicked enough to hate him if he becomes a religious man? Men would not dare thus to set at nought the authority of an earthly monarch. But God is unseen. His day of reckoning is future. Men, therefore, risk the consequences; and when they listen to the ap-

peal: "Whether it is right to obey men rather than God, judge ye," they decide the question practically in the affirmative. "Know ye not," says an apostle, "that whom ye obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" If we obey men, singly or collectively, either their commands or their opinions, rather than God, we do in a most important sense have other gods before him. He may in such case justly say, "if I be a father where is mine honor? and if I be a master where is my fear?" Let us see to it that we have no other gods before Jehovah, either in word or in deed.

Again, we may break the first commandment by loving the creature more than the Creator. No homage is so acceptable to God, as the love of intelligent beings. It is the subject of his first and great command. In this He has made our highest happiness to consist; wisely placing the next degree of happiness in the exercise of the benevolent affections towards others, and in the innocent love of his visible works.

And now suppose we reverse this natural and heaven directed order, and fix our warmest and most affectionate regard on created objects, while towards himself we feel no love. What offence could be greater in his sight? How

solemn and severe the rebuke of Christ: "I know you that ye have not the love of God in you."

My hearers, have we the love of God in our hearts? Is it supreme? Is it deep and fervent? Has it any fruits? Or do we admire the works of his hands more than Himself, and love those amiable and congenial hearts with whose affection He has blessed us, more than his character as expressed in the pages of inspiration?

Let us listen to the exhortation which speaketh unto us as unto sons: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Our friends, our business, our possessions, the objects of taste by which we are surrounded,

> How they divide our wavering minds,
> And leave but half for God.

Alas! do they leave half? Do they, in every case, leave any portion, for Him who first claims the whole, but who will kindly share all but the supreme place in our affections, with any and every lawful object of regard? Have we given him that supreme place? Let us

beware, even in the heart's most cherished impulses, that we do not have other gods before Jehovah. It may be called an amiable weakness; but He regards it as a great sin. Unless repented of and forsaken, it is a damning sin. "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me."

Let me now call your attention to one other important point connected with this commandment. The verse preceding the text is as follows: "I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage." Then follows the text, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." As much as to say,—unless indeed, which amounts to nearly the same thing, we consider these words as a preface to the whole decalogue,—"I have so signally blessed you, and so plainly shown myself to you, that you of all men will be without excuse if you do not reverence and obey me as your God."

My hearers, what might Jehovah say to us on this score? Rather, what might he not say? I will not apply the language literally to our national history, nor refer minutely to those

"works of God, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us."

But with our education, our condition in society, and our many lessons and remembrancers concerning God, if we forget, disobey, and, as far as our homage is concerned, practically dethrone him, are we not of all men most inexcusable?

And now what says conscience in view of the first commandment? We have not worshipped Jupiter, or Brahma, or the grand Lama; but have we worshipped Jehovah?

Have we taken suitable pains by attending to the light within and without us, especially to the light of revelation,—to ascertain the real character of God? Or, have we imagined him altogether or nearly such an one as ourselves, just using the Bible so far as to find some epithet or illustration, which, taken by itself, seems to favor our own wishes as to the treatment which sinners are likely to receive at his hands, and regarding every view of him as unsatisfactory, which disagrees with our own apparent interests?

Again, whatever we have thought of God,

how have we felt towards him? How have we treated him? Have we recognized in him a Ruler as well as a Creator? Have we thanked him for our blessings, and implored his forgiveness of our sins, and entreated his favor and guidance for the future? Have we been anxious to know his will? When it was known, have we denied ourselves, and even risked an offence to others, in order to do it? Or, on the other hand, have we done our own pleasure, and obeyed the demands of public opinion, and deferred to the wishes or prejudices of irreligious persons? Have we cherished within our hearts the love of gold—"that vile idolatry?" Or has some one or many dear friends been so dear to us, that God who made them attractive, and kindly gave us their friendship, has been forgotten, and if not wholly excluded from our hearts, compelled to take a lower place, that these idols might have our warmest affections, and be the objects of our most fervent and constant thoughts?

My hearers, let us think on these things. They are not matters of curious speculation, but practical questions between God and our souls. A careful consideration of them will, I

am persuaded, convince us all, that by the deeds even of this law we cannot be justified.

It may convince some of us, that we have never known any thing of true love and acceptable service to God.

SERMON II.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20 : 4—6.

THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE OR ANY LIKENESS OF ANY THING THAT IS IN HEAVEN ABOVE, OR THAT IS IN THE EARTH BENEATH, OR THAT IS IN THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH : THOU SHALT NOT BOW DOWN THYSELF TO THEM, NOR SERVE THEM : FOR I THE LORD THY GOD AM A JEALOUS GOD, VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION OF THEM THAT HATE ME ; AND SHEWING MERCY UNTO THOUSANDS OF THEM THAT LOVE ME, AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.

In discoursing upon the first commandment, I remarked in substance that the sin of idolatry, strictly so called, is forbidden, not in *that*, but in the *second*. The main point of the second commandment is the forbidding of any sculp-

ture, or other representation, of any person or thing, for purposes of devotion. The making and using of such things for such purposes,—whether they be actually taken for gods, or not,—the bowing down to them, as well as the serving them, is forbidden.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." It has been ignorantly imagined by some that this commandment forbids the exercise of all the imitative arts. But the last clause, is, according to the Hebrew idiom, the key to the first, and shows that sculpture and painting were forbidden only when the objects thus made were intended to be bowed down to, and either worshipped, or used as aids in worship.

I have already spoken of the ten commandments as forming what is generally styled the *moral law*, comprehending the great principles of duty towards God and man, and leaving for another code all statutes of an arbitrary kind, which enjoin certain acts, like those of the

Temple worship for instance, which became duties only because they were thus enjoined.

Perhaps, at first sight, this commandment may appear to belong to the latter rather than to the former class. Of what consequence, we might ask, can it be, in what external mode we worship God, if we only worship him with sincere and humble hearts?

Why not use images, and paintings, and crosses, to refresh our memory and strengthen our faith, as well as weary the mind by vain attempts to conceive of the objects of a spiritual world? Why not employ the aid of the bodily sense to assist our mental vision, and to bring more distinctly before us the wonderful events which the Bible describes? Why should not christians enact the scene of the crucifixion, with a ghastly image, and a reservoir of blood to be pierced with the spear, and the ladder, and attendants taking down the body, and the other minute dramatic forms which may be annually witnessed at Rome? Or if all this is thought too absurd, and too revolting to true taste, as well as to enlightened devotion, why not at least use the crucifix, and have painted emblems of the Trinity, and in every possible way aid our feeble imaginations in religious worship, pro-

vided that the true object of that worship be not lost sight of?

These inquiries lead us to examine what may be called the moral philosophy of the second commandment. It is very plain in the first place, that the Deity has a perfect right to require such homage from his intelligent creatures, and that it should be rendered in such a way, as he chooses,—and that His will, clearly expressed, upon this as well as other subjects, becomes a binding law. Upon a point so fundamental as that of acceptable worship to our Creator and our God, we might expect, that some of his commands would be of a permanent kind, and not merely ceremonial and temporary in their nature. The subject rests on the same ground as the duty of worshipping at all. It might be asked, Why does Jehovah choose to be worshipped? Since He is infinitely glorious and blessed, why does he demand praise? Since he is omniscient, why does he require us to tell him our wants? Since he is unchangeable, why does he encourage our supplications?

To all this the reply is ready. Such is his sovereign pleasure. He has revealed it directly by the universal light of nature. He has

poured upon it the broad illuminating blaze of Revelation. Thenceforth and therefore religious worship becomes a duty, a matter of moral obligation, resulting from man's relation to God, and from God's will expressed to man.

So in this case. The Deity, for certain reasons, prefers that his creatures should address themselves directly to Him, with no mediation but that of his mysteriously divine and equal Son, and without any visible forms and figures to aid the imagination. Consequently, the use of such forms and figures is a sin, a moral evil, a *malum per se*. If any doubt the correctness of this view, let them remember the wide difference between Jehovah and every other Legislator or Ruler; since his character and his will form the true standard of right and wrong. We can imagine no ultimate reason, why even murder and theft are wrong, than that He has so willed. Else why is there not moral wrong in the rapine and slaughter carried on by man among the brute creation?

But if we may, not unlawfully or presumptuously, inquire further into this matter, I would remark again, that in view of what may be called the gravitating or downward tendencies of man's spiritual nature, the Deity may

have considered, that the use of outward symbols of worship would tend to lower the standard of that devotion, and gradually to withdraw the mind from those contemplations of a spiritual Being, in which such symbols were originally designed to aid us; in other words, that these objects, at first intended as wings to the soul in her flight upward to God, would become leaden weights to drag her down, or at least waxen pinions, which would but aid her to a most disastrous fall.

The flesh and the spirit, strangely as in man they are joined together, are yet "contrary the one to the other." The former seems to be a veil, or rather a thick and impenetrable wall, to hide from the latter its spiritual kindred; so that the spirit of men, though akin to that of God, and to that of angels, seems isolated, and for the time degraded, like the captive, who in a massive castle hears the voices of creation, and the joy of happy multitudes, but cannot see the forms of men and things, nor have with them a free communication.

And yet there is, if I may so say, a little loophole in this wall of spiritual isolation,

through which God permits the human spirit to look forth upon the spiritual world. It is at the point where He renders *Himself* perceptible to the moral vision, permitting our spirit to have communion with his Spirit—as children with a father. This, though it does not teach us all knowledge concerning Spirits, does nevtheless tend to enlarge our conceptions, to etherialize our views, so that a man who has daily for a long time, approached God in devout contemplative adoration and prayer, begins to see by faith something more of our noblest nature. He begins to understand something of his spiritual being, and of the wide world of spirits with which he is intimately and eternally, though mysteriously, connected.

And now suppose that finding this adoration of a spiritual Being somewhat difficult, he calls in the aid of sensible objects, and worships God through the medium of a statue or a picture; there is perhaps a sense of relief to the mind, but is it because that spiritual view has become easier and more satisfactory? Is that opening in the wall made wider; and does a broader and more intelligent view offer itself to the eager soul, panting for companionship with its kindred spirits, and especially with the great Fa-

ther of spirits? Oh no,—that little opening has been actually walled up; and the sense of relief comes from the soul's giving up her painful but aspiring and elevating attempts, and sitting down quietly within the narrow circle of bodily vision, worshipping God by sight rather than by faith;—thus instead of her being borne upwards to the Deity, the Deity is rather brought down to the soul's level, and those intended wings have become weights.

Nor is this mere theory. Look at all those branches of the originally pure and simple church, in which images and paintings have been introduced, and you will find the standard of spiritual religion sadly and hopelessly degraded. Now and then an individual, both in the Greek and Latin churches, exhibits a depth and fervor of spiritual feeling, which has resisted all these untoward influences. But in general, I need not say what gross superstition, and what a substitution of the form of godliness for its power have marked those churches. Forgiveness of sin by human authority, the withholding of the Bible from the people, and the utmost irreligion and immorality among a large portion even of the priesthood, are but a few of the fruits, known and read

of all men, of the transgression of that commandment, which forbids the use of "any graven image, or of the likeness of any thing that is in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth." Thus may we learn to justify the ways of God to man, and see in part the moral grounds of even apparently arbitrary enactments.

But there is another consideration to be noticed. False theology has generally been connected with idolatry. The history both of the pagan world and of the nominal church shows us that if men begin by worshipping the true God with the help of graven images and other visible objects, they are likely to end in worshipping *false* gods by the same means.

Idolatry seems to have been the universal passion of the human heart. Not satisfied with having false divinities, the pagan world has uniformly, or almost so, had visible representations of those divinities. Statues and rude paintings, the forms of beasts, of birds, of reptiles, and even of vegetables, have been prepared and honored by different heathen nations. Shrines have been built for them; temples adorned with, and consecrated to them; and

placed in the van of armies they have seemed to lead on vast military forces to battle, and to victory.

Surrounded as were the Israelites by these, in many cases, splendid symbols of pagan worship, and having themselves only the few and simple forms of the tabernacle and afterwards of the Temple, it is not strange that they should have been in danger of borrowing the fashions of their neighbors. But the moment they did so, they borrowed their false theology too. For I cannot think that their worshipping the golden calf, an act of folly into which they were led even while Sinai was trembling under the footsteps of the great Legislator, was only another mode of adoring Jehovah. It was clearly an imitation of the Egyptian calf-worship, and when they said "these be thy gods, O Israel," it seems plain that though they still spake of the Lord, they had for the moment adopted other gods *beside* Him, if not wholly *instead* of Him.

It was so in later days. When the images were set up in the groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree,—it was Baal and Ashtaroth, and their kindred idol divinities, and not Jehovah, whom the misguided people thus

adored. Is it strange, therefore, that to such a people as the Jews, with pagan idolatry on every side, God should have forbidden even divine idolatry, that is, the worship even of himself by the aid of images?

Nor has the history of the Christian church failed to illustrate the same tendency. From crosses and crucifixes how soon did both the eastern and western churches proceed to images and pictures, not only of God and Christ and the Holy Ghost, but of the virgin, and of saints and martyrs almost without number; until these beings, and the paintings or carvings which represented them, originally and piously designed as mere intercessors and aids to devotion, became, at least to the more ignorant, actual objects of worship.

Such is human nature, as developed in all ages; and in forbidding the use of images and paintings as aids to devotion even when Himself is its object, Jehovah has plainly taken the most effectual mode of forbidding and preventing the worship of *false* divinities.

As to the question what constitutes idolatry, it is perhaps needless to say more than has already been said. The only symbolical ordinances of pure christianity,—Baptism and the Lord's

Supper, are sufficiently distinct from any breach of the second commandment in that they present no actual *likeness* of any thing. Were the bread fashioned into human shape, and the wine made to flow from an orifice in the side of the figure, there might indeed seem to be an inconsistency between the Jewish command and the Christian ordinance; though even in that case, many of the ceremonies of the ancient temple-service might appear liable to the same objection. Still on a careful examination, nothing will be found to have been prescribed even in that symbolical and prefigurative ritual, contradictory to the great unrepealed prohibition of image-worship.

It is unnecessary to repeat that the second commandment may, however, be broken, without the introduction of any false gods, and even without actual worship of the forms by which the true God is represented. To make an image, or which is the same thing, to have one made, and bow down before it, is idolatry, though not of the grossest kind, even where there is an intelligent recognition of the spiritual Being thus represented. Such a sin may indeed be committed ignorantly, and with forgiveness; yet it transgresses a positive command of God,

and has wrought infinite mischief in the church; causing her even to rival paganism in her revolting forms, and absurd and cumbrous ritual.

I need not inform you that the second commandment is by one nominal and corrupt branch of the church deliberately erased, and the number supplied by the division of another into two parts. Thousands and thousands even in our own country, denied access to the word of God to see for themselves what he has forbidden, are taught the ten commandments without the second.

To touch for a few moments upon what may be called the history of the second commandment in the christian church:—I will observe that for the first three or four centuries, the use of images and paintings in divine worship was wholly unknown. About the year 300, images were first introduced merely as ornaments. A council held at Eliberis, in ancient Gaul, in the year 305, condemned this practice as an innovation which looked strongly towards idolatry. For about a century, however, the use of images merely as ornaments, gradually gained ground, though opposed strenuously by Epiphanius and other distinguished fathers of

the church, as bearing too near a resemblance to the pagan use of idols.

After this time till the beginning of the eighth century, they were used as aids to devotion, but not actually worshipped, at least by any but the ignorant. But at the beginning of the eighth century, both the monks and the common people worshipped images without scruple, and an edict of Pope Leo in 726, was published to condemn this dangerous innovation, *ruinous* we may say, to the purity of the church. From that time the controversies between the Iconoclasts or image breakers, and the Iconolatiæ or image-adorers, became long and frequent, until the reformation divided the christian world into two comparatively peaceful parties, one of which under various protestant names renounces the whole practice, while it still forms one great feature of the church of anti-christ, both in its Greek and its Roman branches.

It is worthy of notice under this historical head, that the Jews so literally interpret and so reverently obey this part of their original decalogue, that most of them suffer no statues even in their own private houses, much less as ornaments in their synagogues. A similar an-

tipathy, though probably not on the same account, led the Mohammedans to destroy some of the most beautiful monuments of antiquity, both sacred and profane, when they gained possession of Constantinople.

It may not be uninteresting to notice also the commentary on the second commandment, contained in the answers to two of the questions in the Assembly's catechism,—the *larger*, in distinction from the shorter, generally used. If the answers shall be judged to be more minute than was needful, and to hint strongly at certain things of a local and temporary nature, peculiar to the English church in 1643, they are still adapted to give us some good thoughts concerning the spiritual bearings of this commandment. For we cannot doubt that it *has* spiritual bearings, which might have been more fully developed, if Christ had been pleased to comment upon it as freely as upon the sixth and the seventh.

The first question is, "what are the duties required in the second commandment?" Answer; "The duties required in the second commandment, are the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word,

particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, hearing, and preaching of the word; the administration and receiving of the sacraments; church government and discipline, the ministry and maintenance thereof, religious fasting, swearing by the name of God and vowing unto him; as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship, and according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry."

The next question is; "what are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?" Answer; "The sins forbidden in the second commandment, are all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any ways approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion, the making any representation of God, of all, or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly, in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever, all worshipping of it, or God in it or by it, the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, a service belonging to them, all superstitious services, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received

by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever, simony, sacrilege, all neglect, contempt, hindering and opposing the worship and ordinances of which God hath appointed." So say, though somewhat diffusely and quaintly, yet in general very scripturally, the venerable fathers of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

We come now to the remarkable language which follows the direct command, assigning a reason for its observance, and showing the consequences of its obedience or disobedience. "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

The first words exhibit the peculiar feeling with which Jehovah regards all rivalry, if so it may be called, in the affections and homage of his subjects; this feeling is here called *jealousy*. In the same manner He often speaks in the Bible, of worshippers of strange gods, as adulterers and the like.

As to the remainder of the language, it mere-

ly refers to the fact, that by His wise constitution of things, the effects both of obedience and of disobedience remain for a long time, even after the original actors are no more; not that the child was to be held personally responsible for the sins of his parents,—for that principle is elsewhere in the Bible expressly disclaimed; but simply that blessings and curses remain by their effects through more than one generation, thus appealing both to the paternal and the patriotic feelings of men. How plainly does the whole history of the world appeal to these feelings. How careful should we be both as parents and philanthropists, concerning our own example and character, which will be as they always have been, to a certain extent hereditary. We should not dare to do, in this view, what we might be reckless enough to do, if only our own interest and future destiny were at stake.

And now, in view of these two commands, the first and second, apparently the least practical as to us, and on that account the least interesting of all,—what should be our own reflections? Are we to look on them with self-satisfaction, and say, "All *these* things at least we have kept from our youth up?" Are we

to say with the Pharisee, "God I thank thee that I am not as other men, pagans, idolaters, or even as those poor deluded people, who under the Christian name, worship saints and images?"

My hearers, I know not but some of you will suspect me at times of trying to make out a case against you for the mere sake of doing so, and of giving every subject a practical turn, merely for form's sake or in a professional manner as a preacher.

Such, however, is not the truth. Could I pronounce you and myself blameless respecting any part of the divine law, gladly would I do it, and we would join in hearty thanksgiving to Almighty God, that as to that part we were without sin. We have sins enough, without imagining, or confessing, or charging upon each other, any that do not belong to us.

But let us not forget the illustration which Christ gives us of the spiritual and far-reaching nature of these few and simple commands. Indeed is it necessary that we take those comments into the account at all, in order to see that this commandment in forbidding the worship even of God by images, does in fact require that He should be otherwise worshipped,

viz: in Spirit and in truth? Have we done so? Do our hearts pray? Do our souls praise? Do our spirits give thanks? If not, what are our sanctuaries, and pulpits, and psalms, and reverent looks, and decorous attitudes, now sitting, now standing,—but so many emblems and forms, not more acceptable than graven images, and the most idolatrous genuflexions? Let us not forget, that "God abhors the sacrifice, where not the heart is found," and that if we are not in the daily, constant habit of sincere, spontaneous and heartfelt devotion, we do negatively, if not positively break even the second commandment, the very one with reference to which, above all the rest, we have been accustomed in our thoughts, to plead "not guilty."

And then, there is another view of the matter which should not be overlooked. I have endeavored to show in this discourse, that the second commandment may be broken without breaking the first;—in other words, that it is sinful to worship even the true God by the help of those visible symbols which He has, for wise reasons, forbidden. I would also repeat a previous remark, that the first commandment may be broken without any breach of the second. The man who loves his gold better than

his God, has no golden image made that he may fall down and worship it. The man who fears and obeys men rather than God, has no sculpture or painting, representing public opinion. Friends who idolize each other, have no visible symbol which they adore. Yet God sees the heart, and where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.

My hearers, let us thank God that we are not pagans or idolaters in the outward sense. But are we guilty of no *heart*-idolatry? Let us not be deceived; God is not mocked. No outward reverence can blind His all seeing eye, to the true secret of our soul's chief regard. If we love and serve the creature instead of the creator, He will know our iniquity,—He will remember it,—He will visit it upon us, and perhaps for our sakes upon others, whom He has wisely, though mysteriously, left dependant upon our influence. In view of the whole, let us adopt the words of the poet:—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only Thee."

SERMON III.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20 : 7.

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN; FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN.

This is the third Commandment; and of the whole ten among the most practical,—sometimes I have thought the *most* practical,—in its application to modern society in this country. As to other countries, if we may judge from their literature, and from the records of travellers, we shall find reason to conclude that as a profane people we do not stand wholly alone.

One thing is certain; it must be extremely mortifying to a citizen of any Christian nation, to find among the rude and unevangelized inhabitants of distant islands and continents, re-

membrancers of his home, and the familiar sounds of his native language, only in the shape of revolting oaths taught the natives by his own countrymen. To this mortification, we who speak the English language, are perhaps more liable than those of any other Christian nation.

This is one of those commands, which like the fourth, concern our duties to our Maker only, and on that account,—strange to say,—are less thought of than any others. Men who would not for the world bear false witness against their neighbor's good name, will profane the name of their God. Just as those who would not rob their neighbor of a single dollar of his profits, will rob their Maker of that one seventh of time, which he claims as his. There is one thing to be specially noticed about this third commandment. Though men are not injured by our transgressions of it, except by example, and will not punish it,—yet God has solemnly said, "I will not hold him guiltless that taketh my name in vain."

But what is it to take the name of God in vain? The Shorter Catechism in defining the prohibition contained in the third commandment, says, "The third commandment requir-

eth the holy and reverend use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works; and forbiddeth all profaning or abusing any thing whereby God maketh himself known."

I am not aware that this definition can justly be regarded as too minute and comprehensive. The grand secret seems to be, the absolute need in all governments, of a certain degree of reverence to the person, and character, and doings of its sovereign,—whether it be the sovereign king, ruling alone, or the sovereign people, ruling themselves by a delegation.

There must be not only law, and obedience, and respect for the government of whatever kind it is, but some degree of reverence,—that is, a *manifestation* of respect, some forms of propriety, some etiquette in manners, or dress, or mode of approach; else all dignity, and in due time all authority, will be destroyed. All this, in many human governments, has been carried to an extravagant and absurd degree; and seclusion on the part of the monarch, together with the most abject submission and the most servile fear on the part of the subject, have given to our view one of the most humiliating and revolting features of despotism.

Still, there is wisdom in the notion of sa-

credness and reverence, as connected even with human law; since it is but a humble shadowing forth of the profound veneration with which Jehovah has inspired even the savage breast towards the unknown God,—the Great Spirit, and of the sacred dignity in which he has seen fit to clothe His own name and character.

Nor let it be supposed that all this is for mere effect, or from any satisfaction our God and Father can be imagined to have, in the mere fact of being reverenced and feared by his children. He *is* a Father as well as a Creator. He speaks to us as to children, and encourages in us filial feelings, and a filial deportment; but what wise father suffers his children, in their affectionate confidence, to treat him with the rude familiarity of a brother or an equal?

So God, for the better maintenance of that authority, which after all is rather for our benefit than for his own, has seen fit to implant reverence in the human breast, and to nourish it by various enactments, and among others, the one which forms our text—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." He has designed to keep before our minds the vast, the infinite distinction, between Himself

and his creatures. He has intended that we should remember, that although it was needful for him if he revealed himself to us at all, to reveal himself by a name and by traits of character, and even figuratively as a person, speaking of hands and eyes, and the like;—yet that he is a Spirit,—an infinite Spirit, and a *Holy* Spirit, towards whom the slightest irreverence is as absurd as it is dangerous; in other words, that the God of heaven, though kind and condescending, far beyond what any earthly monarch has room to condescend, since His elevation is infinite, may not safely be trifled with.

Can we not see the justness and the wisdom of all this? Does it look like a mere arbitrary arrangement on the part of God, imposing needless restraint upon his humble creatures, and holding them at a needless distance? I think not. The moral philosophy of the third commandment seems to me very obvious and intelligible.

And now let us inquire in what ways it may be broken.

The first is, by downright malignant blasphemy. This form of profanity is least common, and among ourselves almost unknown. It is true, atheism and infidelity have their priests and their altars, where you might hear,

if they were within your hearing, the most horrible insults cast upon God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; insults so gross and so revolting to the universal sense of right, that our laws, ever slow and justly so, to interfere with matters of religion, have in a few instances interposed their authority, and prohibited such vile and corrupting blasphemy, and in one instance punished its hoary-headed high priest.

But all this concerns not us. Not one in this assembly, hardly one in our whole country, while in his sober senses, would ever deliberately insult the Majesty of heaven, or blaspheme his word, or call his works the works of a demon. Let us all guard however, against the habit of cavilling with the Bible, of pronouncing its apparent doctrines unreasonable, and of murmuring at the acts of Providence by which we are made to suffer,—all which things certainly partake of the spirit of that very sin to which of all others we should be ready to plead not guilty.

The second form of profanity I shall mention, is the careless or passionate use, in our speech or writing, of the name or word or works of God, especially his future and final work of justice. There is something which has never

been fully explained, in man's mental constitution, leading him to garnish his speech when under high excitement, with words pertaining to God and the eternal world.

If we grant it to be a habit which has been transmitted from generation to generation, we leave the *origin* of the habit still unaccounted for. I have sometimes been disposed to refer it to the love of the marvellous, so universal in man, which leads the mind when strongly excited by passion of any kind, to seek the wonderful and exciting things of another world, as appropriate to its high wrought emotions.

It may possibly be regarded moreover, as a kind of internal evidence of the immortality of the soul, and of the existence of a spiritual world; since a common instinct leads even those who affect to deny these things, to use their names as freely as household words, the moment all restraint is taken off, and the mind allowed to run riot in its own fancies and passions.

Be this as it may, it is a fact, interesting to the philosopher, and most painful to the Christian, that many men, the moment they are angry, or alarmed, or overjoyed, use the name of the Most High, sometimes in mere

recklessness, sometimes to invoke his damnation upon others, and sometimes, strange and horrid impiety! upon themselves;—offering what a well known tract styles, *the swearer's prayer*, a prayer which if heard, consigns his soul to eternal perdition. One wretch even went so far as to call upon God to do this, *for Christ's sake*, an imprecation to which an aged servant of God who stood by, solemnly and pertinently replied,—"My friend, God has done a great many things for Christ's sake; perhaps he will do this also." The man was much impressed, and I believe, permanently reformed.

Of all these forms and modes of profane speaking, I consider that which is done in cool blood, from mere recklessness and habit, as most offensive in the sight of God. The infuriated man who assails his dumb beast, or his offending fellow-man, with curses and imprecations, has indeed the sin of anger,—which the gospel calls constructive murder,—to answer for, besides that of profaneness; yet we may suppose a man to use these forbidden words in a fit of passion, who would have too much conscience to use them in mere sport. To say that the latter would be the greater sin, would imply no palliation of the former.

There is another form of profaneness,—I mean profane writing,—which on this and other accounts, is more aggravated than most writers or readers seem to imagine. Many writers, especially of fiction, either in poetry or prose, chiefly the latter, seem to think it no harm to put the most horrid oaths into the mouths of their fictitious personages, especially if they contrive to mask their enormity to the eye, by dashes and asterisks. But wherein this differs from any other profaneness, except in being more deliberate, and more pernicious in the way of example, I cannot see.

If it be said that the portraiture of character and manners cannot be complete without it, I would ask whether it is necessary that all descriptions of character should be thus depicted, and held up to the gaze of thousands who will look not to loathe and avoid, but to imitate. I am fully persuaded that many moral and amiable men have in this way contributed to the promotion of one of the most degrading forms of popular wickedness. The elegant, or it may be the vulgar oaths, which when printed on the fine octavo page of a fashionable novel in its first edition, raised a smile in the drawing-room or the library, from some fair or literary

reader, are transferred in process of time, through the channels of coarse paper and a circulating library, to the lowest dregs of society; and our streets echo with a profaneness, which at once by its boldness and ingenuity, shows itself to have been the product of no ordinary mind.

A profane word may sometimes, though I think very rarely, be spoken or written by way of matter of fact statement,—as when a witness in court relates blasphemous words uttered by another; but in general, the passing such words as current coin through society, is hardly less wrong than originally uttering them.

Another form of profaneness is the use of words, which if not actually denoting the name or attributes of God, yet relate to serious subjects. Some of these words were originally of the *most* profane description, but have been softened down by abbreviation or otherwise, to a shape less repulsive to genteel or even female hearing and utterance. Of the latter class many instances are to be found in the older English authors, and more, I am inclined to think, in modern English, than American conversation.

Of another class, are such words as "heav-

ens," "faith," "bless my soul," "my God," —borrowed from the French "mon Dieu," and strangely thought less objectionable, on account of the pronoun prefixed to it,—together with a score of other modest, and apparently harmless expressions, which do nevertheless entrench more or less upon the sacred limits, which like the bounds around Mount Sinai, God has been pleased to place around all that concerns himself and our high and solemn relations to him.

Upon this point, the command of Christ in his commentary on the Rabbinical precepts, has a direct bearing; "I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, neither by earth, for it is his footstool, neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king, neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black; but let your communication be yea yea, nay nay, for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil."

How many little words of appeal,—modest oaths so disguised as hardly to be known, would the strict application of this principle banish from society, not less to the improvement of our taste than of our christian morals. Yes,

my friends, whatsoever is more than simple, and if need be, earnest assertion, cometh of evil, and leadeth to evil, both in ourselves and others. Nor is the church wholly free from fault in this matter. This is an evil which has crept into the habits of all classes in society; and though we may look upon those scruples as needless, which forbid solemn judicial oaths, yet it were much to be desired that a dialect more simple and free from such expressions as those now referred to, should be adopted in ordinary conversation.

I cannot forbear to allude to another mode in which the spirit of the third commandment is often violated. I mean an irreverence, either habitual or occasional, in speaking of religious things. Many do so, without any scornful feelings, and with no consciousness that they are doing wrong; and yet does not the spirit of this commandment forbid our taking liberties with the word and the works of God, as well as with His name?

What would an earthly monarch say to those who should use his language as a convenient vehicle for other thoughts than those it was designed to convey, somewhat in the way of a parody, and speak lightly of some of his impor-

tant plans and doings? Would it be a satisfactory excuse for them to deny that no light use had ever been made of his *name*,—that *that* had been held sacred? Certainly not.

Now we often hear death spoken of lightly; we hear people jesting about preparation for death; the doctrines and duties of religion are ridiculed, or at least treated with great levity; and what is more common than all, scripture is quoted in different connexions from those in which it properly belongs. Many eloquent orators honor the Bible in one respect, while they degrade it in another, by introducing its beautiful images and simple expressions, to set off one of their own periods, or to illustrate some political topic.

I have been pained, nay, absolutely shocked at some instances of this irreverence which I have seen and heard from those of whom I should have hoped better things. All this must be regarded as a transgression of the third commandment. In it, God has forbidden every thing disrespectful to himself, and tending to break down those barriers, which for our benefit he has placed around himself and all that concerns himself. I could heartily wish that the

rude old couplet were again in fashion among the rhymes of the nursery :

> "'Tis dangerous folly,
> To jest with things holy."

Nor would it be altogether out of place on the tables of authors and newspaper editors, or in the parlors and drawing-rooms devoted to social pleaure.

It is, I am persuaded, only a higher and a sterner standard, among the elder and more respectable classes in society, that can stay the tide of reckless levity in these matters among the young, and of brutal blasphemy among the lower orders, who fill our ears with the most horrid oaths at the corner of every street.

Let me call upon parents, guardians, heads of families, employers, teachers, and all lovers of virtue and good order, to notice and to check this growing vice. Rarely do I go out in certain directions without being shocked with oaths and execrations more ingeniously blasphemous, and proceeding from younger lips, than I have ever heard except in larger, and in other respects more immoral cities. Boys from respectable families are fall-

ing into this degrading custom very rapidly I fear, from the mere force of example ; and the holy names of God and Christ, with heaven, hell, and damnation, the most solemn words, and expressing the most awful thoughts any language can convey, are fast becoming the familiar dialect, not only of the wretched candidates for the prison and the gallows who swarm around us, but of many from whom their parents and the community expect better things. I earnestly intreat all who feel that morality, not to say religion, is worth caring for, both as a private and a public blessing, to exert their influence in this matter.

And here let me say, that if it be true that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, it is no less true that the habits of the lips affect the heart, and influence the whole character. It is impossible for young men who have acquired, however inadvertently, and as it might seem to some, almost innocently, the habit of profane swearing, to feel that reverence for God, and that respect for religion, which are readily admitted to lie at the foundation of all virtue.

I do not deny that some men whose general influence is on the side of good things, may some-

times so far forget what is due to themselves and to others,—to say nothing of their Maker's claims—as to indulge in this ungentlemanly vice. But the effect even on them, so far as they *do* indulge, is to weaken their moral sense, and diminish their right feelings concerning religious things; and if you ask them, they will tell you so. What then must be the effect of such a practice on the young, whose principles and habits are in a great measure unformed? Imagine a community in which all the young men and boys, with no other vice, were profane swearers, either habitually or occasionally, and what would be the state of things there in fifteen or twenty years? The result would prove that whosoever should keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, would in more senses than one, be guilty of all.

Let us all, then, both for our own good as well as that of others, seek to understand and to observe both the letter and the spirit of the third commandment. Let a due reverence not only for the name, but for the attributes, works, and doings, of the Great King of heaven, fill our minds. Let us observe the broad line of distinction which both conscience and scripture have drawn between the things pertaining di-

rectly to God, and all other things. The latter may at times afford innocent amusement; the former, never. All that concerns God, and heaven, and the soul, and a future state, is not innocently or safely to be trifled with. In proof of the last remark, we have God's own declaration; "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

In connexion with this subject, I cannot forbear to notice the undoubted fact, that the sin in question has been often followed with sudden and awful consequences,—I will not say retribution,—in this world. Retribution belongs not to time but to eternity; and yet the way of transgressors is hard, even before their feet stumble upon the dark mountains, where no sun or star shall ever rise.

In more cases than one, men have fallen dead in the midst of the most horrid imprecations, or lost some one or all their senses, while calling upon God to make their perjury manifest. These things are not to be regarded as miracles. Perhaps in many cases they may be considered as physical effects of the high excitement which accompanied the profaneness; yet they should be looked upon as solemn warnings; since God may use the nerves,

or other parts of man's physical frame, to show his abhorrence of sin, as well as earthquakes or fire from heaven.

Finally, let us remember that the closing words of the text apply to all sin. The Lord will not hold us guiltless. Men may not know it. They may excuse it. We may forget it. God remembers. He will call us to an account. We may be sure our sin will find us out. God grant that in the day of its coming to light before an assembled universe, we may not be found destitute of a saving interest in Christ, the only Redeemer. And what we do, we must do quickly. The night of death, the winter of the grave, draweth nigh. Are we ready for its coming? If not, we have no time to lose. As the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain, so He will not suffer him to escape who despises his word, and neglects his great salvation.

SERMON IV.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20: 8—11.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY. SIX DAYS SHALT THOU LABOR, AND DO ALL THY WORK: BUT THE SEVENTH DAY IS THE SABBATH OF THE LORD THY GOD: IN IT THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK, THOU, NOR THY SON, NOR THY DAUGHTER, THY MANSERVANT, NOR THY MAIDSERVANT, NOR THY CATTLE, NOR THY STRANGER THAT IS WITHIN THY GATES: FOR IN SIX DAYS THE LORD MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IN THEM IS, AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY: WHEREFORE THE LORD BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY, AND HALLOWED IT.

Thus the fourth Commandment stands upon the sacred page, as having been formally and solemnly given by God, among the still unrepealed statutes of the Moral Law. Strange to

say, the question, whether it is still in force, has been discussed in a manner implying doubt, and even answered in the negative, by some who have shown no such disrespect for the remainder of the code, of which it forms a part.

Forgetting that Sabbath-breaking is forbidden on the same page with idolatry, murder, and theft, and that the denunciations of Divine wrath against those who do their own pleasure on God's holy day, are still in full force, many who pride themselves on their obedience to the moral law, have set aside this statute from its code, and thus to them this sin has become "no more sin."

But has any plausible reason ever been assigned for such an opinion? If so, I know not what it is. The most common objection, perhaps even to some candid and devout minds a serious difficulty, is connected with the change of the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first. Whatever force, however, there is in this objection, seems to me to lie not against the perpetuity of the Sabbath as an ordinance of God, but simply against the usage of the christian church.

Had Christ, who founded the church, been less than divine, or the apostles, who, under his

direction, established its ordinances, less than inspired, this bearing of the objection would indeed be irresistible. In that case we might feel compelled, like the small sect of seventh day Baptists,—the only branch of the christian church which has discarded the observance of the first day, though some others have disclaimed its obligations,—to retain the original Jewish Sabbath, or, as it may be styled, the Sabbath of the Creation.

When we consider that a day was blessed and hallowed, not first at mount Sinai, in the hearing of Moses, but at the very time when the Almighty Creator suspended the operation of that power by which the worlds were made; that the Sabbath was known and observed previous to the giving of the ten commandments, as the regulations concerning the gathering of manna abundantly show; that it has a place among the statutes, not of the ceremonial, but of the moral law, having its foundation, more evidently than almost any other of the commandments, in the unchanged moral and physical nature of man; and that the existence of sacred days, almost universally among the nations of the earth, affords proof both of its early and authoritative origin, and of its adaptation

to the nature and wants of men, we cannot without an express revelation to that effect, blot it from the decalogue. Concerning that sacred collection of rules, which, if they had been obeyed, would, ere this, have restored the primitive Eden, and made it as wide as the world, it well becomes us to say with the utmost reverence and solemnity, "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Around this code of laws, as around the mount from which it was published, God hath set bounds. Let us beware how we "come near, to break through."

We are thus led to another important question. It is the following: What evidence have we that while the commandment remains in force, the day has by divine appointment been changed, and that we are under the same obligations to remember and keep holy the first day of the week, as were the Jews to observe the seventh?

A little reflection will satisfy us that this change *may* have taken place, without in the least degree altering the nature or the validity of the command. It is often said that if the day is changed, the whole is changed; and that if the seventh day is given up, the institution

as an ordinance of God must be abandoned. But is this so? Does all the importance of the institution depend upon its being still connected with that particular day, so that God could not indicate his will to have it changed without in effect repealing the command?

It will doubtless be readily admitted, that the fourth commandment, like the others, was given not for one part of the world merely, not for one parallel of latitude, or one section of the globe, but that it was adapted, with admirable wisdom and kindness, to all situations in which mankind might be placed. But if all the obligation, and all the benefit, is connected with the observance of one particular day, what shall we say of those who dwell at the northern habitable extremity of the globe, who instead of the diurnal distinctions which exist in the lower latitudes of the earth's surface, have in every year, one day and one night, each of several weeks duration? The Sabbath in this respect as in others, was made for man,—for all men,—and if the simple design of the institution is, that one seventh part of time should be set apart to the service of Him who gives us *all* our time, is there any difficulty in supposing it possible for Him to change the day without

annulling the ordinance? I think not. But has He done so?

That he has, might seem, at least, probable, from the occurrence of several remarkable and important events, connected with the early history of the church, on the first day of the week, by which it seems to have been designedly marked as distinct from all other days. Of these, the principal was the resurrection of Christ. He was crucified on Friday, lay in the grave over the Jewish Sabbath,—the Sabbath of the Creation,—and, by selecting the first day of the week to witness his glorious rising,—the completion of his redeeming work,—He consecrated that day as the Christian Sabbath, the Sabbath of the Resurrection. He chose that day too, in more than one instance, as the time of showing himself to his disciples, after his resurrection and before his final ascension. And it was this day, instead of the Jewish Sabbath, which was honored by the descent of the Holy Ghost.

But the practice of the apostles and their cotemporaries, knowing entirely, as they must have done, the mind of Christ, is decisive respecting the change. We have evidence, from the account of Paul's visit to Troas, in the

twentieth chapter of Acts, that religious services, including the celebration of the Lord's Supper, were regularly attended by the disciples, on the first day of the week. From a passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians, we learn that the same day was appropriated, as it often is in Christian congregations in modern times, to collections for charitable uses. All the directions of Paul in his epistles to the churches, concerning the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, show that he did not consider *that* as binding upon them, although if they chose to observe both days, they might lawfully do so. There can be no doubt that the apostle John speaks of the Christian Sabbath in the first chapter of the book of Revelation, under the striking designation of the "Lord's day." We have, moreover, the testimony of many writers, both Christian, Jewish, and heathen, that the disciples in the earliest age of the church, were accustomed to meet on the first day of the week for divine worship, and especially to celebrate the resurrection of Christ.

Is it not plain then, that as the synagogue was exchanged for the church, and the altar with its sacrifices for the devotions and simple ordinances of the Christian sanctuary, so the

Jewish Sabbath, itself an institution, not like those, of the ceremonial, but of the moral law, has been exchanged for the Christian Sabbath, the Sabbath of the resurrection.

In this view how sacred and delightful to the Christian should be this holy day. If David could say of the other, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it," how ought our hearts to exult at the return of this. The first was in honor of the work of creation; the second in honor of that greater work of redemption, in view of which we may suppose the angels of God to have been moved with a deeper sympathy, and to have filled heaven with more sublime praise, than at that first jubilee when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

If then, instead of two Bibles, we have one Bible in two parts, with an unchanged moral code, remaining through both dispensations of the church, and if the practice of Christ, and of the apostles acting under his direction, followed with scarcely an exception by the whole Christian church for eighteen centuries, be considered sufficient authority for the substitution of one day in the place of another, then may we

imagine ourselves addressed, with reference to the first day of the week, in the plain and emphatic command, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Before proceeding to some specifications as to the practical bearings of this commandment, let me call your attention to a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, rendered more strikingly appropriate by being found in connection with one of those beautiful predictions of gospel times, in which the evangelical prophet describes the blessedness of the church under the Messiah's holy and peaceful reign. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

This passage, although it contains a plain declaration of the strictness and spirituality of the divine requisitions concerning holy time, and affords a decisive refutation of opinions

often held respecting the Sabbath, as merely a day of rest and recreation, is still somewhat general in its language. This is true of most of the instructions of Holy Writ; general principles are laid down to be applied by christian discretion and a tender conscience to particular cases. Duties are enjoined, as for example, those of benevolence, charity, forgiveness, and activity in the service of Christ, which it is the province of circumstances, aided by a sincere desire to do right, to enforce upon our attention from time to time.

In answering the question then, "How ought we to keep the Sabbath day?"—we are to be guided in part, by a due understanding of the object of the institution, and an application of the great principles on which it is founded to special cases.

The design of the Sabbath is evidently twofold: the honor of God; and the benefit of man. As to the first; it is plain from many passages of scripture, that our Maker has designed to secure to himself, and to his works of Creation, Providence and Redemption, a reverent remembrance and commemoration. The Sabbath was also "made for man," in the twofold sense that its rest was designed for the com-

fort and health of his body, and its instructions and opportunities for devout thought were intended to elevate and purify his nobler nature.

Guided by these general principles, and by such specific directions as the Bible contains, I proceed to lay down a few rules for christian Sabbath keeping.

I. Those who would remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, must abstain as far as possible, from ordinary secular occupations.

1. Labor. This is the universal lot of man. "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread," was God's original declaration to Adam, when he left Eden to become a tenant of the wide world. Although uttered as part of a malediction, it has become in the present state of man a blessing, rather than a curse. The idle have never been the most respected, or the most happy of the human race. Still, constant toil, whether bodily or mental, tends to exhaustion, and ultimate dissolution. God has therefore provided a day of rest for the relief of wearied nature. "In it," He has kindly as well as peremptorily said, "thou shalt not do any work." But it is asked; is this to be understood literally? Are not fires to be lighted, necessary food to be prepared, the comfort of

inferior animals to be provided for, violence to be repelled, conflagrations to be resisted? For all this we have warrant, both from the Old Testament and the New. But all labor which is not, strictly, according to the dictate of an enlightened and sensitive conscience, a work of necessity or of mercy, is equally forbidden by both.

Here occurs the common question, respecting the care of the fruits of the earth? Is it lawful for me, asks one, to gather on the Sabbath that hay, or grain, or other product of agriculture, which is in danger of injury or destruction if suffered to remain? I answer, No, if the danger results from the ordinary course of Providence, and might have been foreseen and avoided. If the lightning should strike my barn, it is my duty to do all in my power to rescue it from the flames. If fire falls upon my field, and threatens to destroy the sheaves which cover it, it is right to remove them. But what excuse have I, if I voluntarily expose my crops to a known danger, resulting from the frequent showers of heaven, by cutting them down on Friday or Saturday, and then call it a work of necessity to gather them on the Sabbath? It is a necessity of my own

making; and men might in this way make it necessary to break every command of the decalogue.

Similar questions arise, which are to be answered on the same principles, respecting the care of other property. How often are ships sent to sea on this day, and even in many cases in preference to all other days; a custom not at all to be excused from the fact, that the voyage must include several Sabbaths. When at sea, it is a work of necessity to proceed. But to choose God's holy day, for all the labor and bustle of leaving port, is to presume strangely upon the forbearance of Him who has said, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. My hearers, many have so made their calculations as to live and prosper, without insulting Him who gives them their crops, or their success in business, by using His holy time for their own purposes; and those, who have thus made it necessary to labor on the Sabbath, have too often been insensibly led to its entire and unblushing desecration. Those who begin, by gathering their crops on the Sabbath in view of an approaching shower, generally learn to do it without remorse when no shower is in sight; and the shop which was at first opened on that

day, only on special occasions, soon becomes the weekly herald of the Sabbath breaker's sin.

2. Under the head of common occupations, I next mention journeying. Here, as in relation to the last topic, the limit between the sinful and the lawful use of the Lord's day, must be fixed for every man by his own conscience. Walking or riding to some extent is necessary on this as on other days. Such is attendance on public worship, going to meet a dying friend, hastening at the call of misery, which cannot be denied immediate relief. But what would an enlightened conscience say, to such an arrangement of a journey, as to bring a part or the whole of the Sabbath within the allotted time, and to the consequent use of the day with the plea of necessity. What shall be said of the practice, common in many parts of the interior, of riding several miles on the Sabbath day to consult a physician, without any urgent necessity in the case, simply because it is a day of leisure to the patient, whose malady has allowed him to devote the week, even up to Saturday night, to the usual pursuits of gain or pleasure?

I will say nothing concerning the temporal advantages connected with honoring God in this

respect; though all history and experience justify the assertion that if two men should commence a year's journey, one using six days in the week and the other seven, the former, other things being equal, would be in a better condition, both as to progress and health, at the end of the year than the latter. The man who fears God, even if he knew that he should save much time and expense, by using holy time for his own journies, would neither dare nor wish to do it.

On the subject of Sabbath travelling, so important do I deem it, and so practical is it in a community like this, I cannot refrain from enlarging. It is matter of the deepest regret to every lover of his country, not to say, every lover of the will and law of God, that public sentiment should make it for the interest of the owners of our travelling conveyances, both by land and by water, so generally to disregard the Sabbath day. When God's holy day comes in the way of the plans of our steam-boat, and rail-road, and canal, and stage-coach, proprietors, it is generally pushed aside or trampled down with little, if any, reluctance. And since, owing to the weakness of the general senti-

ment in favor of the Sabbath, it in most cases stands in the way of their plans and their interest, it is trodden down as if it were an ordinance of a foreign usurper instead of the King of heaven.

And yet if this were all, it would be comparatively a trifling evil. The highways and the waters might, as now, be thronged by multitudes who fear not God, and the unceasing din of Sabbath desecration go up into the ears of the Lord of the Sabbath,—and though the scene would be appalling, and the amount of individual guilt very great, yet all would be, I had almost said, tolerable, if it included none but those who openly despise God and break most of his holy commands.

But it is not so, my hearers; and by far the most distressing circumstances connected with this order of things, is the temptation it offers to men who in general mean to respect the Sabbath, and even, I grieve and blush to say it, to professed christians, to break God's holy day, either in whole or in part.

It is painful enough to the feelings of a christian minister to be awakened on the Sabbath morning by the signals of arrival and departure

at the water side; but to reflect that there are serious men in those crowds of passengers,—men who, when at home would never think of breaking the Sabbath,—christians even, who, tempted by the opportunity, and led astray by that strange argument, that they can enjoy the Sabbath as well in travelling as in a public house, besides the saving of a day,—are taking God's time, which they have in the most solemn manner promised to keep holy, and using it for the purpose of swelling the tide of Sabbath travel, and thus throwing their influence against the day, and in favor of the most unblushing of its desecrators,—this is too distressing—too heart-sickening to be borne. I do trust it has become almost a matter of history merely,—and yet I fear not wholly so. My brethren, my hearers, one and all, may not your Pastor appeal to you, plainly and earnestly, and beg of you to keep yourselves clean in this matter?

Do any of you seriously doubt that it is wrong to take *any part* of God's time for needless purposes of convenience? Is it right to take two or four or six hours, if we will only spare Him the rest? Is it right to break that part of the Sabbath which comes in the night, if we

will only observe the part which is by day-light? Is it allowable to do a little wrong in respect to the fourth commandment, when we should not venture to do it concerning the sixth or the eighth? What is to become of the Sabbath, if the church of God despise it? And who, my hearers, not members of the church, who will honor it, if you who show so commendable an interest in the support of religious institutions generally, should dishonor it? My heart has failed me, and I have felt for the moment as if I never could raise my voice again in defence of the Sabbath, when I have known that men from distant churches have come among us on the morning of God's holy day,—disturbing the sweet tranquillity of a summer Sabbath morning,—and in some cases on entering our Sabbath-schools, declining to perform those duties for which they truly said, their night-travelling had unfitted them. Brethren, friends, look at this matter, weigh it well,—and say, if any circumstances can justify a man in passing that portion of the night preceding the Sabbath, from midnight to four or six o'clock in the morning, in the way he must if he arrive here on Sabbath morning,—in-

cluding the example to fellow-travellers, perhaps hesitating as to a still more flagrant act of the same kind, the employment of means of conveyance from the wharf, and the interruption to their usual conversation and arrangements of his family,—which would not equally justify him in taking his own vehicle and setting out on a journey on the morning of the Sabbath day.

I esteem it more important than can well be described, that active business men, whether professors of religion or not, should set a high example in this matter. Need I add that I am anxiously desirous that this congregation, composed in so large a proportion of this class, should deserve the high distinction and exhibit the moral influence of a Sabbath keeping congregation; and that their example should invariably be upon the right side. That you all respect the Sabbath as a useful institution, I doubt not. Even infidel patriots and statesmen have thus regarded and defended it. But believing, as I do, that it is also an ordinance of God, and knowing it is only in this point of view, that it has the moral power requisite to ensure its constant observance, in the face of

fashion and convenience, and the desire of gain, I have wished to present it before you in this light, and to do all in my power to persuade you to honor God's holy day, and thus to honor yourselves and bless your country. What might not one congregation do in such a cause, by a firm and unyielding decision;—and with what joy would the minister of such a congregation contemplate their great and beneficial influence.

3. The Sabbath is often broken by being devoted to ordinary reading and writing. This is sometimes considered a small matter. Many who would be quite unwilling to labor on the farm, or in the workshop, or to open their counting rooms, or to commence a journey, on the Sabbath day, feel at liberty in the seclusion of their own houses, to read secular books and newspapers, and to carry on ordinary correspondence. But where is the difference? There is none, my hearers, that I know of; except that in the one case, the sin is public, and in the other private. But does not God judge righteous judgment? Does He not see that secular book, that business letter, or that political newspaper, by which you are casting contempt upon his own holy day?

I have called the sin of secular reading and correspondence on the Sabbath, a private sin. But there is a more public evil connected with it, which I cannot forbear to mention. I allude to the common practice,—I fear, increasingly common,—of visiting or sending to the post office on the Lord's day. Many christian families even, through some indirect agency of friends, perhaps rather tacitly allowed, than expressly solicited, contrive to be in possession before the Sabbath is past, of whatever the Sabbath mail or the Sabbath post office delivery,—those two great evils,—can bring to their hands. Thus in one way and another, the news of the day circulates almost as freely, and correspondence of various kinds is carried on almost as briskly, during the time which God has set apart for his own service, as during any other portion of the week.

4. Common conversation is a frequent method of violating the sacredness of holy time. There is reason to apprehend, that God hears much, that is in this respect offensive to him, even in christian families. How few seem to remember that part of the prophet's description of a Sabbath keeping community, "not speak-

ing their own words." Ministers, even, often have their thoughts involuntarily diverted from the subjects appropriate to their public and private duties, by the mistaken kindness of friends, who cannot forbear as they meet their pastor on the way to the sanctuary, to communicate some item of information, perhaps of great importance, and for which on any other day he would be sincerely thankful.

Under this head, let me also say, that it is exceedingly undesirable, that visits of friends, of only two or three days' duration, should be so arranged as to include a Sabbath; so prone is the mind and the tongue to wander among the many topics of family interest, or common friendship.

Let it not be said that such a restriction upon social intercourse, as is implied in what has now been said, would make the Sabbath a gloomy day. The topics connected with christian hopes, and christian enterprises, are abundant and interesting. Missionary efforts, religious intelligence, christian biography, daily individual experience of the goodness of God, and the weekly instructions of the sanctuary furnish so much and so various matter for con-

versation, that those families which are most conscientious in this respect, may be most cheerful and happy in their Sabbath morning and Sabbath evening circles.

II. Another duty, connected with the christian Sabbath, is a regular and devout attendance upon public worship. That it has pleased God under both dispensations, to constitute this as one part of the due and acceptable keeping of the Sabbath, I need not take time to show. Whether we look at the prescribed practice of the ancient church, or at the example and instructions of the apostles and primitive christians, we have abundant evidence, that the day of God and the house of God were specially adapted and designed for each other. The Sabbath and the sanctuary have been joined together; and it is in their union that God has chiefly blessed them to the good of men. When the church has most loved and best observed the former, she has most highly prized, and most diligently sought the latter. By the foolishness of preaching, it has pleased God to save believing sinners; while saints have seen the glory of God in the sanctuary, and have been ready to echo the psalmist's declaration,

"I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord."

Neglect of public worship, is, I need not say, a common and a great evil. It tends to lower the standard of sabbath keeping in the minds of all, especially of the young. No man, who needlessly absents himself from the house of God, keeps the sabbath properly in other respects; and I regard the efforts which are now making to promote the more general attendance of the community in this country, at some stated place of religious worship, as having an important bearing upon the honor and observance of the christian Sabbath, not less than upon the general interests of religion and good order.

On this point, my hearers, I do not know that your minister has any special cause of complaint. Indeed, I have sometimes thought, that the number of our congregation was less affected by trifling causes, than is common in New-England. And yet does a summer shower, or a winter wind, or some slight indisposition, never keep you at home, when you might and ought to be at the sanctuary? In such cases, ask yourselves if it would be right

for the minister to be absent for a similar cause; or for all the congregation, if each one were in the same circumstances with yourselves, to desert the sanctuary and leave him to preach to the walls. It is inexcusable and discouraging to a preacher, when any of his people, are detained from public worship by causes which would not interfere with their ordinary week day pursuits, either of business or of pleasure. A little reflection and observation will convince us, that this is by no means an uncommon case, even among professors of religion. Brethren and friends, let us never for any trifling cause neglect the assembling of ourselves together in the sanctuary of God. Here he has recorded his name. Here he bestows some of his choicest blessings; and by a constant and reverent attendance at his earthly temple, we shall, thus far, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and be preparing to spend an eternal Sabbath in the temple made without hands.

While upon the subject of public worship, let me say a word respecting the manner in which it should be attended. There is reason to fear that transgressions against the fourth commandment are sometimes committed within the house of God, which are not less offensive in

His sight than more public desecrations of the Sabbath. David says, "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever." How often is this forgotten! Worldly conversation on the steps of the sanctuary, together with slumber, significant nods, and even smiles within its walls are so many breaches of the fourth commandment, of which all ought to be both afraid and ashamed. We have as little right to turn the house of God into a place of amusement, as to make it a house of merchandize.

III. The christian should prize and sanctify the Sabbath as a day of private devotion and spiritual progress. It is far from being sufficient in the sight of God,—it will not even satisfy ourselves, if our hearts are in any measure right,—that we abstain from open violations of the Sabbath, and are punctual in our attendance at the sanctuary, and that our reading and conversation have a religious cast. There is,—to use the language of a plain but discriminating christian,—a great deal of *talk about religion* which is not *religious talk;* and even christians may converse and read and think, on subjects not strictly secular, which yet in the form in which they are presented to his mind, have no tendency to the accomplishment of the great

purpose to which the Christian's Sabbath should be devoted. He has a great work to do. He must grow in grace and prepare for Heaven. He has a race to run; a warfare to accomplish; a journey to complete. For all this the Sabbath is peculiarly fitted and designed. Great is his mistake, and irreparable his loss, if he neglects thus to use it. How desirable that every day of holy time, should, in a spiritual sense, witness the Christian's progress a Sabbath day's journey towards Heaven.

It will be observed that I have said nothing respecting the question, When does holy time begin? I esteem the answer both difficult and unimportant. It is the obvious design of the Head of the church, that one seventh part of the week, shall be religiously devoted, and that this shall include the day on which the Saviour rose. Had it been essential in His view, that this season of holy time should commence at the setting of the sun, or that the hour of midnight should mark its beginning, He would doubtless have so informed us. As it is, we have only to choose for ourselves which evening we will observe, and strictly and conscientiously regard it. If I am not mistaken, however, those who consider the Sabbath eve-

ning as secular time, will find it more difficult to consecrate an entire day, and will oftener find both evenings disturbed and desecrated by worldly cares, than those who regard the day as closing at midnight. The observance of both evenings as seasons of quiet reflection, while one is specially consecrated in the mind, is perhaps the most excellent way.

As to the whole subject of Sabbath keeping, let me say, that in doubtful cases, it is best to err on the safe side. It were surely a less evil, to devote to the service of God a larger portion of time than he has claimed, or to consecrate it more strictly than he has required, than to rob Him of even the smallest portion of time or reverence which is his due. Something, too, should often be yielded for example's sake. Many things are lawful which are not expedient; and that lover of religion and good morals has but poorly learned the lesson of self-denial, which the example of Christ inculcates, who is not willing to abstain even from what he considers an innocent use of holy time, when, by so doing, he can save the Sabbath from reproach in the view of an ungodly world.

I close with a few remarks.

1. Christendom is accumulating, a vast weight of criminality and consequent treasure of wrath, by the desecration of the Sabbath. Of all the sins against God, which stain the history and mar the beauty of christian lands, this is most frequent, and perhaps most offensive in His sight.

Look over the face even of our own land, the land of the Pilgrims, which still bears the impress of their footsteps, and from which their Sabbath devotions ascended, warm from their hearts, acceptable incense to Heaven. See tens of thousands, filling the public conveyances, which in defiance of the God of the Sabbath, are this day rolling along our highways, or traversing our lakes and rivers. Look at the thousands of mail transporters and postmasters, who in this christian land are obliged to break the high commands of Heaven, or give up their living. See the open and unblushing profanation of holy time by statesmen and legislators, for purposes both of private amusement and of public business ;—and then look at the fifty eighth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, and say whether our national sin in this matter, may not be one cause of our national difficulties and dangers.

And if even here, within the enclosures of the American Zion, the Lord of the Sabbath sees so much to offend Him, what shall we say of the older and more corrupt communities of European Christendom? But I forbear. We may not cast the first stone. I blush for my own country, to know that a British parliament, through a large and respectable committee, devoted whole weeks to an investigation of the abuses of the Sabbath, while in this home of religion, this birth place of modern freedom, this garden of the world, as America, with as little modesty as truth, is often styled, tens of thousands of the citizens petitioned on the same subject during the same year, only to be insulted, and abused, and driven with contempt from the halls of legislation.

When God shall apply his line and his plummet to all the nations of the earth, we have reason to anticipate that Sabbath breaking will occupy a place of fearful prominence, and that its share of retributive justice will be proportionably dreadful. Among the benign institutions of Christianity,—the instruments of moral elevation, and consequent national prosperity and individual happiness,—the Sabbath, even by acknowledgment of unbelievers, stands first;

and are we so secure in our civil liberties and social happiness, that we may venture to throw away the instruments by which God has enabled us to obtain these blessings? Let the Sabbath be forgotten; let the moral influence of one day's religious instruction in seven, be lost from among the influences at work upon the public mind; let the next generation grow up with the example and with the habit of openly violating this holy day; and we shall see crime multiplying, and property losing value, and political wrangling growing into civil war, and the judgments of heaven coming in streams of wrath upon us, as upon the head of Sabbath destroying France in the time of her weeks of ten days. Nor would it be long before this people, with all their boasted intelligence and liberty, would become unfit to govern themselves, and some tyrant's hand be ready to build his throne.

2. I call upon you, then, to promote in every possible way the observance of the Christian Sabbath. This is to be done by the decided and uniform influence and example of every man who fears God and loves his country. More is at stake upon the hazard of your influence, than perhaps you are aware. It is in

vain to recommend or command any duty to the degraded portion of society, which the more respectable do not practise. And can we say, my hearers, that we are without sin in this matter? Has our influence been decided, our example uniform and correct? Let us remember that the kind or even the degree of transgression is of little consequence. It matters not whether it be worldly business, or secular reading, or unnecessary travelling, or neglect of public worship, or trifling conversation, in which you indulge. All, *all* are wrong, if the Sabbath is God's day. And if it is not, then any or all the ten commandments may be erased to meet our wishes, or suit our convenience.

I call upon you, then, as you believe the Bible, and as you expect every word it contains of threatening against sin to be fulfilled;—I call upon you as you love your fellow men, and as you pity the poor degraded beings, who fill some of our streets on this day, and are making themselves a pathway by their Sabbath crimes towards the prison and the gallows;—I call upon you as you love your country, and as you would have her saved from the certain doom of all nations which despise God,—to maintain, not gloomily or pharisaically, but yet, scrip-

turally and firmly, the sanctity of that day, which he hath hallowed and commanded us to remember and keep holy.

Finally. The Christian will love and honor the Sabbath for its own sake. To one who is in a proper state of spiritual feeling, it would be as needless to urge the positive command of God as a reason why he should observe this day as it would be to persuade a hungry man that it is his duty to eat.

What a precious rest from secular toil;—what a sheltered harbor from the waves of worldliness;—what a spiritual feast-day to the earnest and improving christian. These sacred hours remind him of the ages of eternal happiness which he expects to enjoy. The tranquillity and stillness which reign on every side, and which give, or used to give a New-England Sabbath a character so marked and memorable, how do they suggest to his mind the sweetness of that rest which remaineth for the people of God! The crowded and solemn assembly, reminds him of the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven. The praises of the sanctuary, seem to him, an anticipation of the new

song which the redeemed will sing, an appropriate preparation for the sublime and glorious harmony that will resound through Heaven.

To such a man, how precious is every hour. He never robs his Maker or himself by devoting an additional hour to sleep, or suffers a trifling excuse to keep him from the sanctuary.

Are there any among this assembly, to whom the Sabbath is a dull day; and who can make it tolerable, only so far as they depart from the principles now laid down, as to the manner of its observance? We may easily imagine circumstances under which the Sabbath would wear a new aspect, and have connected with it a most deep and thrilling interest.

Let us suppose that death has passed upon all the generations of men; the earth consumed by fire; the judgment passed; and the changeless state of all the dead, whether in the abodes of light or of darkness, commenced. At some remote period in the progress of eternity, when the wicked shall have endured and the righteous have enjoyed, a length of existence answering to all the conceptions they ever had of eternity,—multiplied ten thousand fold,—a light, as of the dawning day, begins to glim-

mer through that dreadful darkness which enshrouds the lost. Hell stands aghast at the unwonted sight, and the agonies of remorse and mutual hate are almost forgotten for a moment, in busy conjectures as to the meaning of this strange phenomenon. What new era is approaching in the annals of unending sorrow, what change is come over the spirit of that dream, yet not a dream, though like a dream in mystery and horror, which has lasted for so many successive cycles of ages?

As the dawning twilight increases, a voice is heard, the same which had first spoken on earth, and afterwards shook not the earth only, but also the heavens. It now stills the murmurings of the pit, as in loud and silvery tones it proclaims the beginning of one more Sabbath. The light increases. A glorious sun shines; celestial envoys of hope and mercy, radiant with the accumulated holiness and love acquired by ages of heavenly life, are seen on every side. A rainbow spans the retreating cloud that has rolled up from off the face of the dark world. It is the bow of hope. Its bright colors are reflected in the wan faces where despair has so long sat enthroned. But enough.

Suffice it to say, it is a *Sabbath*, with the same means, the same offers, the same facilities for salvation which we now enjoy, would it be a dull, a tiresome day? How should we spend it?

Such a Sabbath, beloved friends, we shall never see. God grant that none of us may ever need to see it. But what ought we to do, what will we do, with *these* precious Sabbaths? I ought rather to say, with this, which may complete the long catalogue of *our* Sabbaths, and witness the closing of our earthly account.

SERMON V.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20: 12.

HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER; THAT THY DAYS MAY BE LONG UPON THE LAND WHICH THE LORD THY GOD GIVETH THEE.

This is called in the epistle to the Ephesians, "the first commandment with promise;" not meaning merely, as many children, and perhaps others, understand, the first commandment which has a specific promise connected with it, for it is in fact, the *only* one of this description, referring to its importance as shown by a promise. It is also the first command of the *second table*, enjoining a relative duty, that

is, a duty to our fellow-men, the first four having regard wholly to the Creator. It is, as was just said, the only promise recorded in the decalogue. Two of the commandments are attended with general promises and threatenings ; but to this alone is a definite promise attached by way of motive to its fulfilment. Let us thank God that he has given this special sanction to a command based upon one of the purest principles which the Fall has left among the foundations of human character ; a command which is destined in its turn to be the basis of that reverent regard for things holy and venerable, which will be the frame work of a new, regenerated, human character, when the desecrated earth and her sinful inhabitants shall be again pronounced 'very good.'

In such a light do I regard this duty of filial respect and obedience, as not only one of the best elements of individual character, but lying at the foundation of all those conservative habits and influences, which form the safety of the world, that I can hardly bring myself to occupy the time allotted to this discourse, by entering so fully into the detail of its practical bearings upon those who are yet children, as might be best, even for the most salutary im-

pression of the command itself upon all our minds.

Family anarchy is one of the greatest curses God ever permitted to fall upon civilized society. In savage life, it would prove instant annihilation to *all* society. Hence an instinct there supplies the place of law, and although the aged and infirm parent is sometimes destroyed by violence, and oftener turned out by the roadside to die of hunger and exposure, yet, in infancy and childhood a stern and even bloody authority is maintained. Perhaps this very sternness and absoluteness of parental power, extending as it often does in savage and even semi-barbarous nations, to the control of the life as well as the actions of the child, may in its excess prepare the way for the horrid retaliation just mentioned; so that parricide is the dreadful progeny of infanticide. But this parental control, however abused, tends to keep society together. It would be easy to show that without parental authority there would be *no* authority; and how long a community can exist in a state of total anarchy, the history of the world plainly shows.

We often find a mark of divine wisdom in such an ordering of natural causes and relations,

that they shall exert a strong influence upon those of a moral kind. Of this we have an instance here. Man, unlike all other animals, passes through a long period of helpless dependence, before he is capable of taking care of himself. This period varies, in the case of the inferior animals, but is in all comparatively short. The beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, after intervals varying from a few days to a few weeks, are seen to possess both the muscular strength and the natural instinct of their several species. They walk, or swim, or fly; they seek and devour their food; they pursue their enemies, or fly from them; they construct, some of them, commodious habitations; and in short, act the part assigned them in the scale of animated nature, as readily and as perfectly a few weeks, or days, or even, some of them, a few hours, after they begin to exist, as ever. Hence there is no necessary, permanent connexion with the parent. All interest and even recognition soon ceases, and the new comer, after a brief and slight introduction to the world he is to inhabit, is left to follow his own instinct, and if I may so say, to act for himself; and though he can make no improvement upon the intelligence or the habits

of his predecessors for centuries before, he is at least in no danger of falling short of the uniform standard of the species to which he belongs.

Not so with man. For many months he is absolutely, physically helpless; and for several years, intellectually so. His period of infancy is long. No degree of attention and education can materially abridge it. Left to himself, he would starve and die. The instinct of parental love, not suspended as it is in the brute creation at an early period, because it is no longer necessary, continues undiminished; and by its great strength and uniformity, together with the self-denying acts of patient care to which it prompts, both constitutes and enforces a claim for submission and reverence on the part of its protected and dependant object.

I have spoken of a claim. But let it be remembered, this claim must be understood and asserted by the parent, or it becomes practically null and void. The principle of reverence and obedience, though not wholly a stranger to the human heart, yet lies in a manner dormant, and is subject to the counteraction of other and strong impulses. Lying thus half buried in the infant breast, nothing is easier than for the parent, by a mild, yet firm and uniform exercise

of authority, to call it forth and develope it; but let him suffer it to remain undisturbed, by never demanding its exercise,—that is, by never *commanding* any thing,—or let him by violent, and unreasonable, and contradictory commands, lacerate the feelings, and outrage the reverent sensibilities of the child,—and in either case he has himself to blame that his child is not respectful and dutiful.

But let us look more distinctly at the meaning of the language in which the fifth commandment is given. "*Honor* thy father and thy mother." The original word rendered "honor," is derived, from a word signifying weight,—thence figuratively, dignity; thence the word in our text, to treat with respect, to give proper deference. An apostle by way of commentary upon this command, says, "Children *obey* your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord;" and again, "Children obey your parents *in the Lord*, for this is right." The striking language of the wise man, which every child, and especially every disobedient, disrespectful child, ought to remember, has some explanatory bearing upon the subject: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley

shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

The language then of the text, with these indirect scriptural explanations of its import, demands of children such respect, and submission, and obedience toward their parents, as the parental and filial relations may justly claim. It is such honor as is *appropriate to the condition*, that God requires of those who are *in* the condition. The command is not an arbitrary one, nor, as such, defined with exactness. It is rather an allusion to a natural instinct, and a requisition of suitable regard to be given to the voice of that instinct. We have only to ask, then, in what relation the child does by the ordinance of the God of nature, stand to the parent, in order to know what measure of love and obedience is due in that direction. And how should such a question be answered?

I reply, the parent is to the child during extreme infancy as *a visible divinity*. God has made the parent the instrument or agent, under His own supreme and controlling providence, not only in the existence of the child, but in its preservation and growth, until it shall not only have some power to take care of itself, but also capacity to imagine another being,—the

real Deity from whom the deities of its infant imagination, viz. its parents, received their authority to control, and their power to protect it. Thus thrown by Providence into the care of those to whom under Providence it owes its existence, the child naturally looks up to them; their wisdom suggests its only idea of omniscience; their power is, to its view, omnipotence; their example its standard of right; their authority, if properly held, is undisputed; and in short, the *infant's* idea of its parent, so soon as it has ideas of any thing, may be imagined to resemble the *child's* idea of God.

During this early period, which may be called the minority of the soul—while as yet no sense of duty can exist, instinct and necessity seem to supply its place, and the child both honors, loves, fears, and trusts, its parent as its superior, as its divinity. This is right, for God has ordained it;—though I cannot forbear here to say that it invests the parent with a fearful responsibility; since these early impressions, made if not remembered, upon the young and susceptible mind, at an age perhaps earlier than we are accustomed to suppose, may form the elements of character, and even give a strong bias to the

moral sense in its gradual and mysterious developement.

But to return. If the parent is the infant's divinity, both for protection and restraint, that infant mind should at the earliest possible period be taught to look beyond these vice-gerents of Heaven, to a Creator and Ruler who made and governs both its parents and itself. When this lesson begins to be learned, the parent is not degraded, though God is exalted. As, when the traveller "sees Alps on Alps arise," the snowy peak which just now seemed to hide its head in the clouds, above all its fellows, appears no lower or less majestic, when rolling vapors disclose the monarch of the hills towering high above all the rest.

What a breaking in of light, what an enlarging of the child's spirit, at that moment, —never to be discovered by others, or remembered by himself, when first he conceives of a being superior to his parent, who made them, and feeds them, and clothes them, and governs them, as *they* do *him!* Still he honors them. Still under God, he depends upon them. Still, until he is of mature age and understanding, he is to obey them, with only a single condition,

expressed by the apostle when he says, "Children obey your parents *in the Lord.*" The parent is no longer his God. There is another, and He must be obeyed. We all admire, instead of blaming, the disobedient child, who having been taught that God has said "Thou shalt not steal," refuses to obey the unworthy parent who commands dishonesty. But with this condition, the child is to honor and obey the parent as still occupying a place subordinate only to God and assigned by Him.

To make it more plain that all this is not an accident, but comes in the established train of the divine plans, we have only to remember that God is our father and that we are his children. He has used this illustration as the one most befitting the case. He says to his rebelious children, "If I be a father where is mine honor," thus teaching us that the literal and finite father, as well as the infinite, has a claim to reverence. Thus the *necessity* for filial dependence and respect in infancy, changes with advancing childhood and youth, to a *duty.* The foundation, deeply laid beneath the surface, among the invisible and chaotic elements of character disturbed and disarranged by the fall, rises gradually to view, and is prepared for a no-

ble superstructure, to be fashioned by the divine hand with human instruments, of all that is fair and reverent. The degree of dependence, both bodily and mental, gradually diminishes, until the time arrives, generally in civilized countries fixed by law, when the child is prepared to take his place in society, and no claim remains on the part of the parent but one of gratitude and respect, due to such services rendered, and to such a character and age, as those of an elderly and venerable parent. Thus begins and grows the duty and the habit of FILIAL PIETY, words deserving to be written in letters of gold.

And now let us look at the promise : "That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This is simply an implied assurance of long life to those who should obey the fifth commandment. But are we to look upon it as a literal promise, with an exact and uniform fulfilment? Are we to understand the Great Lawgiver as declaring that those who obey their parents shall in all cases live longer than those who are disobedient? I think not. The promise evidently had primary reference to the condition and prospects of the children of Israel at that time. They were journeying to the promised land. It was the

land which the Lord their God was about to give them. And He assures them that their permanence and prosperity, in that expected and much desired possession, would depend upon their attention to this command. I suppose that herein He distinctly recognized the natural connexion between a due degree of reverence, and the prosperity, and even the peaceful existence of society; reverence, primarily to parents, as the earliest possible object thereof,—next to God, as the father of all,—and thence to the "powers that be, which are ordained of God." I consider this clause as the statement of a fact as well as a distinct promise, and instead of its needing a particular act of God's hand to fulfil it, I suppose that He must have changed the whole course of social nature in order to prevent its fulfilment. The repetition in Deuteronomy explains the nature of the promise,—"that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee." The mere physical effect of an early habit of respect and reverence to our natural superiors, by restraining the passions, and promoting a quiet, gentle demeanor and sentiment, would be highly favorable to longevity; and it needs little argument to show that

it could not long "go well" with any community where this first and great commandment of the second table was despised.

The view now taken is fully in accordance with that most excellent compend, to which I have already more than once referred in illustrating the decalogue. It says, "The fifth commandment requireth the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals; and it forbiddeth the neglecting of, or doing any thing against the honor and duty which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations." It is true, parents only are specified in the statute, but who needs to be informed, that in early reverence or contempt for the parent's authority, is to be traced the origin of permanent character and habits as to *all* reverence. No wonder that the civil law of the Jews, framed as it was by God himself, punished undutifulness to parents, as the egg which if not destroyed would break forth into the viper of scornfulness and treason; scornfulness and treason against the divine KING, as well as against his human vicegerents and their administration.

To children and youth, let me earnestly and affectionately apply the subject.

My young friends;—God never lays any commands upon His creatures which it is not for their interest and happiness, as well as their duty, to obey. He has commanded you to honor your father and your mother. Have you done so? I will not ask if you have openly despised and insulted them. I should be sorry to think it possible of any of these children,—in a Christian land,—in a Christian congregation,—most of them in a Sabbath School,—that they should treat their parents with that scorn and disrespect which we sometimes see among the ignorant and abandoned.

But there are other ways of dishonoring parents. You dishonor them if you do not obey them constantly, quickly, and cheerfully. Children sometimes obey at one time, and disobey at another; they obey, after being told several times; they obey with frowns, and with whispered words of discontent. *This is not honoring your father and your mother.* God has given them authority over you. This they exercise, I presume wisely and kindly, though firmly. To this you must submit. They will not, like some wicked parents, tell you to do wrong,

to steal, or to speak falsehoods ;—and what they tell you, you should do quickly and cheerfully. When I go into a house, and see children frowning when bidden to do a thing, and either refusing to do it, or doing it after many commands and much urging, I wish to ask them whether they have ever learned the fifth commandment.

But obedience is not all. You ought to respect your parents, and to speak to them in a becoming manner. Even if they are very kind, and permit you to approach them very familiarly, you should never forget that they are your superiors in age and in wisdom, and above all that they are your parents. To them you owe your existence ;—and many a sleepless night and anxious hour have they passed on your account before you were old enough to know any thing about it. They deserve to be treated kindly and respectfully. They expect it. Above all *God commands it.*

And let me say a word to all the young, including those who have begun to act for themselves, respecting the feelings and treatment proper towards parents in the decline of life. Your obligations and their just claims, my young friends, do not terminate with childhood ; nor

do they end when adult years begin. The parental relation itself, is a great thing, so that even negligent and unworthy parents, who have made their children to blush for them, should never be made to blush for, or by, their children. Like that considerate son of old, we should seek to conceal rather than to expose the faults and infirmities of those who gave us being;—and while they live, even if they should forget that they are parents, we should never forget that we are their children. Whatever sacrifices your filial piety may incur, remember that they are all due to those, between whom and yourselves such a relation subsists, and by whom in most cases such weighty and unnumbered favors have been conferred.

O that God would cause all these children and youth to feel their solemn obligations to love and obey their parents, while under their control, and while they live to respect and honor them,—so that all the blessings promised or implied in the text, may be theirs. And let me again repeat in the hearing of those children the fearful words of King Solomon: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat

it." This, my dear children, is figurative language, but it has a solemn and a fearful meaning. May there be no disobedient, scornful children among you! Such, God will neither love, nor bless.

To parents, let me say: If it is the duty of children to obey, it is yours, to command. This, I have been lead to suppose, many parents never do. Indeed if all parents had done so for the last generation, we should never have heard either of mobs or of non-resistance societies, those extremes which meet in a common centre, of wild, disorganizing fanaticism. I repeat it, my hearers, God has made it the duty of parents to *command*,—not only to *have* a will, and to make it known in the name of counsel and advice, and to find fault if it be not obeyed, but to *enforce* it. I have said, that the parent is the child's first divinity. Home is his world. The domestic administration gives him the first idea of law and restraint. God has made it necessary for him to feel the force of law, both divine and human; and from the parental government his first and strongest impressions of government must come.

Now suppose there is *no such thing* as parental government shown to him, or exercised over

him; that he begins to act his own pleasure without restraint, and goes on to do so, with now and then a passionate and ineffectual attempt from his parent to control him, perhaps, too, in a matter of mere selfish convenience on the part of the parent, and not of high sacred moral principle, such as a question of honesty or of truth. What is the result? This feeble effort is like an insufficient enclosure around a field, which only tempts and accustoms the unruly herd to break in.

The child thus without domestic law, grows up unconscious of legal restraint. He now forms habits of independence, which neither divine nor human control can afterwards wholly break. If he had awaked to consciousness in an atmosphere of domestic law, where certain things *must* be done, and certain others *must not*,—where commands like those of the Medes and Persians in firmness, though mild and reasonable, were constantly enforced,—he would have become accustomed to restraint. When the commands of God began to press upon his conscience their high and holy claims, he would have quietly yielded, though not without that reluctance of heart which is coextensive with

the effects of the Fall; and when attending to necessary education, the requisitions of a school teacher or of a tutor would have found from him, not perhaps a cheerful, but at least an unresisting submission. So in later life; as a citizen, he has a habit of subordination; if under a monarchy, he respects his sovereign; if in a republic, he respects those, even, whom his own voice has helped to elevate, and viewing them as for the time not his servants, but his lawful rulers, obeys their laws, and seeks only a legal and a timely mode of relief, if he deems those laws unjust or unwise.

In a word, he has REVERENCE in his mental constitution. The aged, the venerable, those in authority, the laws, in short, the rights and interests of common humanity he respects. He is no slave. He may be a warm lover and an ardent advocate of liberty. But he is no disorganizer. He is no despiser of God, nor contemner of men. He has within him some of that true reverence, which alone gives a man any true self-respect, and which alone keeps the moral and social world together, as the gravitating and centripetal power holds the physical world together, and binds with no tyrannical but most beneficent sway continents

and islands and mountains and oceans, in one consolidated mass. But the child who never learns at home that his own will is not supreme law, and that he may not in all cases do as he pleases, what foundation is there in his mind, either for the fearing of God, or a proper regard to man? What wonder that if he obeys not his father whom he has seen, he should disobey his God whom he has not seen? What wonder that he should be a troublesome schoolboy, and a turbulent youth, and that in manhood he should either turn rioter, break the laws under pretence of supplying their defects, or with the avowed purpose of setting them at defiance,—or that in a more respectable way he should aim to subvert law, by joining some association declaring it wrong for any human being either to exercise or submit to any human authority whatever? There is *no* wonder, my hearers. Family anarchy is a root strong enough to bear all these branches and many more. It springs up in the cradle, and lo! its boughs already overspread and darken the land.

I appeal to you, then, as Christians, as lovers of your species,—nay, as lovers of your own safety and peace, to seek to stay that process

by which reverence is fast becoming an obsolete word, and the thing it signifies, a matter of history merely.

In this fifth commandment, short and simple as it is, I find the seminal principle of all reverence. In the narrow but fertile soil of the nursery this plant is to germinate, which afterwards transplanted and nurtured, is to bless and preserve society.

I advocate no domestic tyranny, but I deprecate domestic anarchy. Parental love is generally a sufficient safeguard against the former; —it too often degenerates into the latter. Yet the wise man tells us that to spare restraint is to hate the child. Practically it is so. And the disobedient, self-willed children and youth who are growing up with a contempt for parental wishes, may possibly live to see that it had been better for themselves as well as for others, if they had been compelled in childhood to yield their own wills to the will of a wise and affectionate parent.

Finally, let all, whether parents or children, young or old, remember that it is true of this and of every other command of the Bible, as is expressly declared concerning the third commandment, that "the Lord will not hold him

guiltless who" transgresseth. His laws are something more than good advice which may be neglected with impunity. Let us neither hope nor fear under His government, mild and parental as it is, any of the weaknesses of an overfond father. "God cannot be deceived, and He will not be mocked."

SERMON VI.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20 : 13.

THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

"This commandment at least, have I kept from my youth up," I seem to hear one and another of my hearers exclaim. And yet the Apostle John says, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer;" and the Saviour, commenting upon this very commandment, speaks of him "that hateth his brother without a cause," as transgressing its spirit, though he offend not against the letter of the law.

I make these remarks at the outset, that you may not put yourselves into that most profitless posture, not less so than one of slumber or of

total inattention,—I mean, a posture of hearing wholly for others. Some of you may have already thought that such a subject would be exceedingly appropriate in a state-prison chapel, or in some vaulted gallery into which open the cells of the condemned, and that it in no manner concerns yourselves.

But, my hearers, no subject in all the Bible ought to be thus regarded. All scripture is profitable, either for doctrine or reproof, or correction, or instruction in righteousness. It was given by inspiration of God, not to angels, but to men, and however the direct application of the letter may seem to pass us by, as do the exhortations concerning the treatment of masters and of kings—still the spirit of every commandment is worthy of our attention. Let me hope then for your careful hearing, while I attempt to explain the grounds, the meaning, and the practical bearings of the sixth commandment.

I first remark that the nature of the case, together with other passages of the scripture seems to limit the prohibition, to the taking of *human* life. I am not aware that it has ever been understood differently; though some heathen superstitions, particularly among the Hindoos, may possibly have originated in a vague

tradition respecting this commandment. A devotee of great sanctity, once being assured by a missionary, that notwithstanding his scruples against destroying animal life, he did of necessity, in every draught of water which he took, and in every morsel of some kinds of food which he ate, swallow and destroy thousands of animalculæ, replied that he was provided by the Creator with a natural network in his throat, of so minute texture, that no such event could occur. Another is reported to have crushed with his foot the microscope which demonstrated to him the same fact.

But this notion of the Brahmin finds no echo in Christian lands; and while the sixth commandment may suggest a caution as to the needless and wanton destruction of any animal life which the Author of nature has seen fit to enkindle, the *prohibition* guards only the life of *man*. This alone, of all terrestrial life, is said to be the breath of God. "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Such life, as we might reasonably suppose, is not to be trifled with. Its great Author has invested it with a sacredness which nothing else on earth possesses. Our own life and that of others, even the hum-

blest of our race, outweighs in our natural, unperverted estimation, any amount of treasure, or the lives of inferior animals. Who of us would ever think of hesitating in such an alternative? The destruction of human life, how strongly and painfully it affects us! What horrors surround death, in all its forms, when it gains a human victim to its power! The speaker well remembers the shudder with which, many years since, he saw the dead body of a poor inebriate lying in the snow, where she had perished with cold, having aroused the attention of himself and others by her shrieks for aid, which were however, too feeble and indistinct to cause any alarm. A noble horse, or a faithful dog, might have suffered as much, and might have been a greater loss to the world; but a score of these animals, lying dead, would not have awakened a tithe of the horror caused by that single spectacle.

A part of this strong sensitiveness on the subject of human life, is no doubt caused by our belief in immortality, and especially in probation here, to be followed by retribution hereafter. The great principle of Revelation, often assailed, but never overthrown, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," naturally

invests the moment when the seed-time ends, and the eternal harvest begins, with peculiar importance. The certainty that when we, or our fellow-beings, even the humblest, or the youngest, or the most degraded and useless, shut our eyes upon this world, we open them upon another, and learn the secrets of the grave, and enter upon a new and unchanging condition of life, is enough of itself to make death a serious thing.

But without attempting farther to account for the feeling, we may assume that there *is* a feeling, in every human breast, which accords with the spirit of the sixth commandment. And yet so many are the motives, and provocations, and facilities, for destroying life, both our own and that of others, that the Great Author of life has seen fit to add to the voice of conscience that of Revelation, and to say expressly: Thou shalt not kill. A single glance at the heathen world, where only very indistinct notions of immortality attach far less importance to life than it wears to the view of those who regard it as a period of probation, will be sufficient to show that this command was not given in vain. Nay, the history of Christendom demonstrates the same truth, both by the single

murders, and by the extensive slaughters, which it records.

But what is the meaning of the statute? Does it forbid *all* taking of human life? So it has been interpreted by some. They regard all killing as murder. Not only defensive war, but private resistance to an assassin, and even the course of justice under human laws which require blood for blood, have been sometimes classed under the same head, and regarded as so many infringements of the sixth commandment.

Far be it from me to weaken in the slightest degree, in any heart, that regard for human life, that horror in view of its destruction, which is so deeply laid among the elements of our moral nature, and which, as I have already hinted, is likely to have the happiest influence on our religious feelings. But all excessive views on any subject seem to me even more pernicious in the end, than those which are partial and defective. They beget prejudices against the real truth, which years will not efface, and, calling into exercise what may be styled the antagonist principles of human nature, lead other men to the opposite extreme.

Concerning the right and duty of human gov-

ernments to take life by way of punishment, my own mind is at rest, when I remember that the same Being who has said, "Thou shalt not kill," has also said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Are these two commands contradictory? By no means. How plain, on the other hand, that the latter is the result of the former. It is by way of enforcing it, of deterring men from its transgression, and of showing more strongly than could be shown in any other way, His abhorrence of murder, that the Deity has made it punishable with death.

I know it is a solemn, a dreadful thing, to take the life of a human being. God meant it should be; and it might be asked why, if He intended that one life should pay the forfeit of another, He did not see fit to take it himself, by lightning from Heaven, or by sudden disease, or by some miraculous blow. It is enough to say, He has otherwise directed; and that by a command which cannot be shown to partake of the temporary character of the ceremonial law of the Jews, he has appointed man as the executioner of this high and awful sanction. Perhaps He designed the very horror which would be awakened at the bare contemplation of such a duty,

to increase the reverence for human life, and to strengthen the binding power of the sixth commandment.

Let it not be said that such destruction of human life is but increasing the evil, and sending another soul, perhaps unprepared, from time into eternity. Such limited views *men* often take ; God, never. If His infinite wisdom sees that for every score of murderers who pay their lives as a forfeit to the offended laws of God and man, an hundred other lives will be saved, who will deny that there is not benevolence in the arrangement ? However, as I said before, so He has ordained ; and we cannot deny the right of a human government to put this law in force, without denying its right to control the liberty, or to tax the property of those who are its subjects.

I regard a denial of the lawfulness of capital punishment, though proceeding in many cases from an amiable humanity, as involving the most dangerous principles, and tending to set aside all government. The same I feel compelled to say, of extreme views concerning peace and non-resistance. To forbid a nation to save herself from rapine and slaughter by force of arms, or to require an individual to

submit tamely to the blows of the assassin, when he has the means of defending himself, is in my view to give the good into the hands of the bad, in a way which the God of Providence never intended, and against which, since the Fall introduced sin and discord into the world, He has expressly provided. When the choice is, between killing another and being killed yourself, I know of no law which obliges you to prefer the latter. It seems to me as wrong to commit suicide as murder. We are not commanded to love our fellow-men better than ourselves; and while we should all be guardians, to a certain extent, of each other's lives, I think we owe a first duty to our own. Of what use would it be that a government may make laws, if it may not enforce them? The former right is seldom denied,—indeed never, except by those whose views on the latter point compel them for consistency's sake to become "no government," as well as "non-resistance" men.

Let it not be said that thus taking one life to save another, is doing evil that good may come. Nothing can be called evil which the Bible justifies, and even expressly enjoins.

But we have dwelt long enough upon the negative part of this subject. If the sixth commandment does not forbid judicial sentences of death for murder, or for acts, like midnight arson and a few others, manifestly endangering life, and therefore tending to murder; if it does not forbid defensive war, whereby a nation may protect its inhabitants from violence, and itself from being overturned; if it does not forbid private self-defence against the villain who compels me to choose between homicide and suicide, (and it should be remembered that all the commands of Christ, respecting turning the other cheek, and the like, had reference to injustice and violence, which might be attempted, but not to murder,) the question still recurs, what is forbidden by the sixth commandment? The wise men whose words I have so often quoted, answer this question briefly as follows: "The sixth commandment forbiddeth the taking away of our own life or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tendeth thereunto."

Assuming this as the best and most comprehensive definition which can be given, I proceed to point out some of the practical bear-

ings of the command thus understood. I remark:

I. It condemns all *duelling*, in every form and under all circumstances. Duelling is a voluntary combat with deadly weapons between two persons. And in what light can it be viewed, so as not to present the double and horrid features of intentional murder and constructive suicide? Unless indeed, as is not uncommon among such "honorable men," some trick of ingenious cowardice is resorted to by one of the parties, to secure his own life; in which case his deadly purpose, instead of being divided between suicide and murder, includes only the latter, in one of its most cruel and deliberate and treacherous forms. As to suicide, I do not ever say it is intended by the duellist, and yet his voluntary exposure of his own life is certainly a *sin* against his own life.

What else than all this is duelling? What more need be said to prove it that, which I have asserted it to be?

Two men, without any offence in either which the laws forbid, or, if there be such offence, under a government which is ready to punish it, agree to take the law into their own hands. They consent to put each his life into

the scale of skill and of chance, and try which way it will turn. To this end they make the most secret and deliberate and deadly preparations; and when the time has come, they go forth with a few companions, accomplices in the crime, aiders and abettors of murder, and make a careful, and perhaps a repeated attempt to destroy each others lives.

No matter what is the result; no matter what the provocation. They stand both convicted before God, as murderers. And that King proceeded upon ground no less in accordance with sound morality than with good policy, who erected a gallows, and then gave permission to two of his officers to fight, with the understanding that the survivor should be led to instant execution.

And yet all this is seen and tolerated in Christian nations; and it awakens alarms, and calls forth a general burst of indignation, only when some political question becomes connected with it, or when some distinguished man falls from a "high estate, weltering in his blood," into the grave of the duellist. Yet common assassins are abhorred, and their names "cast out as evil." Verily, the sixth commandment was no needless statute.

II. It forbids *suicide*. Whether self-destruction is ever perpetrated in a state of mind which may be called sound and accountable, I shall not now stop to inquire. For a sin, even *that* sin, committed in any other state of mind, no account will be required. It is in fact no sin. Still we should all remember that insanity, and its consequences, do in no measure affect our past transgressions; and that our probation may be terminated, by a loss of intellect, years before death, as well as by death itself.

But we are not only to abstain from the sudden and violent destruction of our lives, however irksome they may have become to us, but from "whatsoever tendeth thereunto." All reckless negligence, all needless exposure, all indulgence of appetite, endangering the health, is a sin against our own life. See the commencing inebriate. He shows marks of disease. An unnatural paleness, or undue color—perhaps both by turns,—appear upon his countenance. Languor succeeds to strength. Frequent slight indisposition leaves his friends in no doubt of the cause, which indeed he himself half begins to suspect. He is bartering, not only respectability, but health and life, for the gratification of his appetite. He is breaking the sixth com-

mandment. He will die, unless he reforms, in the sight of Heaven a suicide. O, I would kindly but earnestly expostulate with him. I would say nothing concerning property, or respectability, or friends whose hearts are aching for him; nothing, now, of the soul which he is putting in jeopardy of such a fearful doom; but I would speak to him of his life, which by a gradual but sure process, he is undermining; a life whose spark was enkindled by God, and which he has no more right to throw away by the bowl, than by the dagger or the pistol. I would beg him to STOP, lest he should by and by fill not only a drunkard's, but a suicide's grave; a suicide too, without the blessed apology of insanity.

III. The sixth commandment also forbids *offensive war*. I use this phrase in no technical sense. In the affairs of nations, a war may be essentially defensive, on the part of a government which does in fact commence hostilities. But I speak according to the common sense of mankind; and say, that for a nation, for other cause than peril of life and liberty to its inhabitants, to commence a process by which thousands of innocent men shall be hurried violently into eternity, is but breaking the sixth com-

mandment on a large scale; a scale which, though it may be to men overwhelming and bewildering, is perfectly understood and accurately measured by God. Will no one be called to account for the hundreds of millions, whom war has either directly or indirectly slaughtered, since the world began? Truly, the Lord will not hold man guiltless in this matter.

As I have spoken plainly concerning extreme views on the subject of peace, I shall be equally explicit as to the bearing of the sixth commandment on all offensive and needless wars. Let us look at some of their results.

One is, the undervaluing of human life. What cause is there, in all the course of earthly events, like war, to beget that indifference to the life of man, which will conceal the value of the SOUL of man, and cause it to seem a light thing to die and go to judgment? I need not say, that one universal hindrance to human salvation is a forgetfulness of immortality. However common and fatal the error of forgetting that we must die,—to forget that we shall *never* die, is more common and more ruinous. The falsehood, "Thou shalt not surely die," was the device of Satan's sophistry to ruin

Adam. But how many thousands of Adam's children have been ruined by the greater falsehood, "Thou shalt not surely live again."

When a man has forgotten or disbelieves that he must live forever, his heart is dead and his soul is lost. If he is to die like a brute, why should he not live like a brute? How many, because they doubt or forget that "The spirit of a man goeth upward," live, as to all spiritual things, like the beasts whose "spirit goeth downward to the earth." To such unbelief, God has opposed barriers; to counteract such forgetfulness, He has furnished remembrancers; and all that tends to throw down the one, and mutilate or destroy the other, is injurious to man, and the object of God's abhorrence.

One of these barriers against the flood-tide of unbelief,—these hints to prevent oblivion of immortality,—is that natural reverence for human life, and that dread of human death, which has been already mentioned. This reverence for the life of man, is, I am aware, the offspring in part of the very sentiment whose safeguard I have described it to be. And yet, like an affectionate child, who in his manhood protects the parent that nourished him in infancy, this feeling protects the other; and in pro-

portion as a man learns to despise life, in that degree he learns to overlook the future duration of life, and to forget all that is consequent upon dying. The moment you tear down that partition, which, in the view of an unperverted mind separates human life from all other life,—the moment you come to feel that "he who slays a man is as if he cut off a dog's neck," that moment the delicate, and in the depraved and sensualized heart, almost exotic, plant,—the consciousness of an immortal and accountable nature,—is chilled and withered.

And has not war such a tendency? What effect has it upon those who *make* war, and who plan campaigns and battles? What is their object? Of course, to gain the greatest possible advantage over the enemy. And if, between two possible degrees of advantage, there should be a probable difference of five or ten thousand of the *lives* of the enemy, would that turn the scale, and induce the commander-in-chief to decide on the less advantage, because the blood shed was to be less? So far from it, that you have already perceived the failure of my illustration, arising from the fact, that almost necessarily, the more loss of life on one side, the more advantage to the other.

In one of the volumes of the writings of Washington, we find a direction of that great and good man to a subordinate officer, to be sure, in executing a certain movement, *to annoy the left wing of the enemy as much as possible.* And what did he mean by "annoying the left wing?" What, in the name of humanity, but to *kill* the left wing, as many of them as possible, and if all, so much the better! Has all this no tendency to lower a man's—even such a man's—estimate of the value of human life?

And what is the effect of war upon the actual combatants? Did you ever hear an old soldier describe his sensations when on the battle field? The first feeling, he tells you, was one of anxiety. He trembled. He wished himself in a place of safety,—not, it would seem, an unreasonable wish, at least for a man who is aware that his soul is unprepared for judgment. But after the work of death has commenced, how changed the whole current of his feelings! All fear is now gone; death has no terrors; the dying are trampled on with indifference; the flying balls are heard with as little apprehension as the buzzing of insects; and his only thought is, how he may kill the greatest possible number of those fellow men near

him who wear a different colored coat, or use a different weapon from his own, or have a differently painted or embroidered banner, waving over their heads.

It is true, the feeling in this man, of indifference to life, both his own life and that of others, will in a measure pass away as the excitement of the battle subsides. And yet who will say that the sense of reverence for the human spirit has not suffered from the shock? No, my hearers, you cannot replace that dislocated joint in his mental frame; you cannot tune again that jarring chord; the fair harmony of the Creator's works is broken. One battle has made life less precious to that man, and the soul less a reality in his view; place him in two, or in ten battles, and you have the hardened man of blood, who thinks as little of his life as of his soul, and as little of either, as of the life of his horse or his dog.

And what is the effect of war upon the public mind in this respect? The people pray for victory; they hope for victory; they give thanks for victory. Thus it becomes in their view a sort of duty to pray to the God of Heaven to send some ten or twenty thousand unprepared souls, more or less, into a wretched eter-

nity. And when their prayer is answered, then follow rejoicings, and illuminations, and thanksgivings, that it has pleased God to allow them to kill so many of their fellow-men; and the more deaths, the more rejoicing; the more perdition, the more gratitude.

Whether, therefore, we look at the direct or indirect results of war, we shall find it equally opposed to the spirit of the Gospel and to the requisitions of this part of the Law.

IV. The spirit of the sixth commandment as explained by Christ and the apostles, forbids all anger and hatred, and interdicts all those habits and occupations which tend to shorten our own lives and those of others. By the common law of England, a man is considered a murderer, who in a populous town, without warning given, lets fall a stone or a timber upon the travelled path, "for then," say the commentators, "it is malice against all mankind." I would that I might have opportunity earnestly and kindly to request all those who have any thing to do with the manufacture, or importation, or sale, of that which may be and is abused, to the hurt and death of men's bodies, not to say their souls, to reflect upon it, and ask themselves if they are doing every thing

they can, "tending unto the preservation of their own lives and the lives of others."

Let me also recommend every possible act of humanity; all needful care for the poor; the encouragement of every invention for saving life; and the fostering of the medical and surgical professions, both by providing facilities for the study of anatomy and in other ways, as having a direct bearing upon this subject.

There are various forms of reckless as well as of malicious homicide, such as ignorant and conceited quackery on the part of those who attempt to repair the human frame, without knowing the simplest principles of its construction; trials of speed in steamboats, where a number of human lives are little thought of in comparison with five minutes of time gained on a rival conveyance; and many other neglects of this command, on which it is the duty both of individuals and governments indignantly to frown.

But I pursue the subject into detail no farther. If the value of human life and the duty of preserving it, has been in even the slightest additional degree impressed upon your minds my object will be attained.

Let us in spirit as well as in the letter, be diligent promoters of the observance of the sixth commandment; cultivating those generous affections which the Bible approves, and avoiding all that bitterness and hatred, which it so unequivocally condemns as involving the essence of the crime of murder. Let us remember, too, that He who has said, "Thou shalt not kill," has also declared that he "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." This is the second death; everlasting destruction. If the death of the body is frightful, what shall we say of the death of the soul? God grant us all, eternal life in His Son. Amen.

SERMON VII.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20: 14.

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

God is a Spirit. So is man. God is an Infinite Spirit; man, a finite one. God is *only* a Spirit; man is something else beside. Yet both are Spirits.

Of man's Spirit, God is the Father; while of his body, He only styles himself the Framer. Important distinction! The *hand* of the Deity made the human frame; the *inbreathing* of the Deity made the human soul. That divine inspiration, that spiritual paternity, what an honorable origin did it give to man's nobler nature,

though for a time associated with, and confined within, and assimilated to, the tabernacle of an animal existence.

Well has it been said that to such an imprisoned spirit, death is not so much a death, as a resurrection. Yes! in this sepulchre the spirit is entombed; and yet because it is a whited sepulchre, and fair to look upon, it is idolized, and honored, and regarded as the spirit's home and dwelling-place. Nay, the spirit itself is often overlooked, or regarded merely as the high priest, and not the Divinity, of this sepulchral temple, this monumental abbey.

It is the great glory of the Christian religion, that it restores this broken and distorted image of man, as viewed by man himself, to its true proportions and relations. It reveals to him his own rational and immortal self, as the nobler, the only truly noble, part; while it presents his animal nature, not indeed to be despised, since it was curiously and wonderfully made by a hand which never errs, and provided with faculties and appetites fitted to its highest good, and the highest good, too, of its immortal tenant, and yet to be ranked far below that immortal part, and to be held in strict subjection to its imperative claims, and its highest welfare.

The whole genius of Christianity, as to the comparison between the animal and the spiritual man, and its influence on their mutual relations, is developed in those striking words of St. Paul: "But *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection*, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Noble lesson! which neither heathen philosophy, nor heathen religion ever taught. The latter has often placed both its hopes and its ceremonies, in the grossest animalism; while the former has either sanctioned the most unlimited indulgence of appetite, or by an unnatural prohibition, has but increased the evil it sought to remedy, enchaining and destroying the body it undertook to keep in subjection, or else adding hypocrisy to excess.

It is only Christianity, which by teaching us to use the world without abusing it, has shown the mind how to use the body as a servant, without crushing it on the one hand, or being overcome by it on the other. It might be easy to apply this statement to the various principles of our animal nature; and to show that godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise

of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

But I proceed to remark specifically; that the Christian religion has taken care for man's spiritual and temporal welfare, in one important respect, by the simple and single ordinance of marriage. And it is to the universal, the honorable, and the unperverted use, of this institution, that the seventh commandment and all the scripture hints and teachings on this subject, have reference. It is a highly important and solemn subject, affording no room for trifling, when properly discussed, except to persons of weak minds and bad hearts. God who created us with certain impulses and passions, and who will call us to account for their abuse and perversion, knows it to be a solemn subject, and if mirthfulness shall exist in minds or be shown on the countenances of any present, God sees and man may know, that their views and feelings are neither just to the subject, nor honorable to themselves. We should rather resemble children or fools, than wise persons, if we could not look at a great fact in our nature, our history, our relations to God, and the bearings of life upon our eternal destiny, with sobriety, and a candid willingness to be instructed.

I submit the following statement, as comprehending my own view of the scripture doctrine, and of facts, on this subject.

That our Creator, having seen fit in creating and perpetuating mankind, to follow the analogy of the whole animate creation, has also seen fit by an ordinance of single, separate, and faithful matrimony, to provide for the peace, purity and welfare of society;—that many of His severest threatenings are recorded against all that is contrary to that institution, either in thought, word, or deed; and that sins against the spirit of the seventh commandment have actually been the cause of more individual misery, and public debasement and ruin, than any other class of sins, as appears both from sacred and common history.

As to the divine authority of the marriage institution, nothing can possibly be plainer. As might have been expected concerning so essential an element in the structure of human society, God has not left it without abundant witness. The whole scripture account of the creation of Adam and Eve leaves the doctrine of single, permanent, marriage,—that is *Christian* marriage, as opposed both to polygamy and to change,—hardly less distinct than it is left by

the more minute instructions of the New Testament. As to the existence of polygamy among the Jewish patriarchs, which has been supposed by some to sanction the practice, and to show that the original form of the institution of marriage, as confined to Adam and Eve, was changed by the will of the Creator, I shall give you only the conclusion to which a full consideration of the subject would lead us. This I shall do in the words of another. "When we reflect," he says, "that the primitive institution of marriage limited it to one man and one woman; that this institution was adhered to by Noah and his sons, amidst the degeneracy of the age in which they lived, and in spite of the examples of polygamy which the accursed race of Cain had introduced; when we consider how very few, comparatively speaking, the examples of this practice were among the faithful, how much it brought its own punishment with it, and how dubious and equivocal those passages are, in which it appears to have the sanction of the divine approbation; when to these reflections we add another, respecting the limited views and temporary nature of the more ancient dispensations and institutions of religion, how often the imperfections of the patriarchs and

people of God in old times are recorded, without any express notification of their criminality, how much is said to be *commanded*, which our reverence for the holiness of God and His law will only suffer us to suppose were for wise ends *permitted*, how frequently the messengers of God adapted themselves to the genius of the people to whom they were sent, and the circumstances of the times in which they lived; above all, when we consider the purity, equity, and benevolence of the Christian law, the explicit declaration of our Lord and His Apostle Paul, respecting the institution of marriage, its design and limitation;—when we reflect, too, on the testimony of the most ancient fathers, who could not possibly be ignorant of the general practice of the apostolic church; and finally, when to these considerations we add those which are founded on justice to the female sex, and all the regulations of domestic economy and national policy, we must wholly condemn the practice of polygamy."

I will revert only to one point alluded to in this extract; I mean the equality or near approach to equality in the number of the sexes. The male children born into the world are to the female nearly as nineteen to eighteen;—a

disproportion providing for the greater exposure of men to violent death by war, shipwreck, and other causes,—and showing, as it seems to me, very conclusively, the design of the Creator as to this matter.

Without dwelling upon any farther proof of the divine institution of marriage, such as our Saviour's presence and miraculous act at the ceremony, as performed in Cana of Galilee,—the frequent comparisons of the relation between Christ and His church, with that between the parties in such a union, and the like,—I would now call your attention for a moment, to the next remark in my above general statement, viz: that this institution was designed, and so far as it has been strictly and properly observed, has had the effect, to promote the peace, purity and welfare of society.

Its history is the internal evidence of its divine origin. For where has either of the three blessings just named been found, except under the shadow of this sacred tree? From the polygamy of Asia,—the strictest and least abused form of licentiousness,—down through all the gradations of disobedience to God's law of marriage,—even to the gross animalism of the savage, or the more guilty levities of some polished

and well instructed communities in Christendom,—nothing has come from this form of disobedience to God's law, but misery, and strife, and degradation. On the contrary, we cannot find a community where this institution has been known, and respected, and observed in the strictness and purity of its original design, which is not peaceful, moral, and happy. In the train of this virtue all others seem naturally "in beauteous order" to arrange themselves; and as we look abroad upon the face of society both ancient and modern, we cease to wonder that the Bible contains so many threatenings against this sin, and seems almost to regard it as the very personification of all vice.

This is another point included in my general statement. You need only to glance at the pages of the holy scriptures in order to perceive, that sins against the divine institution of marriage,—for so I regard *all* transgressions of the seventh commandment,—are not only more frequently forbidden, and made the subject of more dreadful threatenings, but oftener used for the illustration of sins against God, and as personifications of sin in general, than any other class of transgressions.

If the people of Israel wandered from God,

and worshipped idols, they were spoken of as an unfaithful spouse to their "Maker their husband,"—as He styles Himself, in at least one passage. If a nation is to be described as wicked in the extreme, "an *adulterous* people" is the phrase employed. One heresy of a foreseen corrupted form of Christianity is spoken of under the head of "forbidding to marry;"—while the church of anti-Christ is styled "the great harlot," the mother of abominations, drunk with the blood of the saints.

See too, the frequent cautions of the apostles to the Christian churches on this subject, cautions severe and plain, almost too plain for modern ears,—showing that the sacred writers thought it a dangerous point, which ought to be well guarded, and also giving us a glimpse of the state of that heathen society by which their converts were surrounded, and from which many of them had been taken. In that fearful passage too, in the sixth chapter of the first of Corinthians, where so many damning sins are enumerated, which those who commit "shall not inherit the kingdom of God," sins of this class are included under two or three distinct specifications.

Nor has the providence of God, failed to

confirm His word. Shame and misery, disease and death, have all followed in the ghastly train of this giant sin. Jealousy, and hatred, and war, beside a thousand other nameless and deplorable consequences, have set the seal of God's reprobation upon the unrestrained indulgence of human passions. Over many of the results of this sin, a veil must be thrown. But let the young remember that horrors untold await the transgressor; and that the fair bowers of indulgence but cover the gateway to despair and misery. It is indeed true as the wise man has said, of those who tempt, or are tempted, to disobey the holy restrictions of God on this subject, that "their feet go down to death, their steps take hold on hell."

But there are a few of the social and moral bearings of the subject which admit and demand a more particular notice.

The first is, the influence of the marriage institution, when observed in its simplicity and purity, upon the character and standing in society of the female sex. It is well that woman should love the Christian religion; since from that alone has sprung Christian marriage, to which she owes the proud and noble, yet modest and gentle, place she occupies, at the head of

society. The licentiousness of barbarous nations, and the polygamy of the semi-barbarous,—what have they ever done for the fairest portion of creation, but to render it the most degraded and despised?

Where but in *such* countries, would the doctrine have obtained currency, that "women have no souls?" Where else have they, where else *could* they, have been treated as man's property,—as his slaves, the objects by turns of his angry and his sordid passions, when the Creator so kindly and so wisely adapted them to his respectful and endeared and sacred companionship?

The very differences of physical and mental structure, which seem to assign to woman a quiet place in the scenes of human life, sheltered from its noisiest bustle, and its weightiest cares, have also prepared the way for that considerate and protective feeling towards her, which is fitted alike to secure her dignity and her happiness. But all this is attained only in those states of society in which the divine law of marriage is recognized and obeyed.

Nor is the licentiousness of paganism, or the polygamy of mohammedism, necessary to the impairing of her dignity and her degradation

in the scale of society. No, it is well she should understand, it is well her true admirers,—and such are all "honorable men," and no others,—should understand, that every offence, in thought, word, or deed, against the strictest purity,—whether committed by man or woman,—is an insult to the dignity of the whole female sex, an inroad, slight perhaps, but real, upon those beautiful and holy barriers, which in Christian society so defend and guard the delicacy and the happiness of those, who have neither strength nor courage to defend themselves by arms or by eloquence.

It is no wonder that woman should so terribly visit with her withering indignation,—her relentless scorn,—the frailties of her own sex. When the sins of the other, generally more inexcusable, shall be viewed with equal detestation, and resented with the same severity, she will have done something more worthy of herself for the dignity of her sex.

I have spoken of indignation and severity. I fully agree with many modern writers that these silent but withering rebukes are unequally administered, when but one sex is made to bear them, and the other excused, or even viewed with a kind of shuddering admonition. But I

would also say, that neither upon one sex or the other, should the door of hope be forever closed. Evidence of reformation,—though always liable to more suspicion than in most other cases,—yet *due and proper evidence* of reformation should be the ground of a slow but encouraging confidence. We forget our own unworthiness,—we overlook the example of our Father in Heaven, if we forgive not the penitent. And while, when I consider as I have said above, that this class of offences is against the dignity and the rights of the whole female sex, I could almost excuse the virtuous among them for cherishing an unforgiving and an exterminating hatred, against all, even the slightest transgression, of either sex—(I say, *exterminating*, for who could live under the concentrated frown of woman in her matronly or maidenly dignity?) Still, I would earnestly desire that a way of return might be kept open for all, who have not proved themselves utterly and hopelessly unworthy of those encouraging smiles, with which we should always welcome the wandering of the human race back to the paths of rectitude. Else, how can we say "Forgive us our trespasses *as* we forgive those who trespass against us?"

My next remark upon the social bearings of this subject, has reference to one of the most pure, exalted, and beneficent feelings, of which human nature is capable. I mean *true and honorable love;* resembling, while it differs from, the friendships which sometimes exist between persons of the same sex, and founded not less upon original differences in the mental and social qualities, than upon other distinctions. When God said it was not good for man to be alone, He had a deep spiritual meaning. And of all the marks of design in creation, which prove the existence of an intelligent and benevolent Creator, I know of none more striking, than that adaptation in the mental sensibilities and emotions of the two sexes, which makes their presence agreeable to each other, and which, under favorable circumstances, produces a permanent and ever increasing preference for the society of an individual.

This I call LOVE; "The only bliss of Paradise that has survived the Fall;" one of the most generous, exalted principles of our nature, though degraded by many unworthy associations, and so treated by many modern writers, both in poetry and prose, that the word is often all we find to remind us of what it might and ought

to signify. This lives, only in those countries and in those communities where God's laws are observed. Elsewhere it degenerates in a manner and measure which we will not attempt to describe. Admired, sought after, is woman, every where; she is *loved*, only where she is respected; and she is respected only by the virtuous.

But this evil has a weighty bearing upon private happiness. Individuals may know,—they *ought* to know, that all unworthy feelings tend not only to prevent for the time, but forever to preclude, those which are worthy and right. The noblest earthly susceptibilities of the soul, those which God has used as illustrations of the deep and holy love of saints and angels to each other and to Himself, may be wholly and forever repressed, and as it were, overgrown, by other and unhallowed sentiments. The heart may be so perverted by false associations, that it is no longer capable of loving, or worthy to be loved, as God designed it should be. How much do they lose, in this as in every thing else, who underrate or overlook their spiritual nature, and treat themselves as possessing a mere animal existence!

I cannot do justice to this subject, without reminding you of the spiritual and comprehensive import of this commandment, as laid down by the Saviour in the 15th chapter of Matthew. The passage is familiar to you all. It applies to all, of either sex. And it shows most conclusively that the seventh commandment is often transgressed by those, whose reputation is never in the slightest degree impaired.

Let me also remind you of one clause of the Lord's prayer in its application to this subject. You have already understood me to refer to the petition,—"Lead us not into temptation,"—a prayer which can never be properly or consistently offered by those do not so far as practicable, *avoid* temptation. I would not recommend that affected, overscrupulous manner which rather betokens a wrong heart than the purity of a right one. But I would advise and earnestly entreat all my hearers, especially the young, daily to offer that prayer and to act consistently with its spirit in this as well as in other matters.

Nor is it an easy thing even in a community like that of New-England, to avoid temptation and to preserve strict purity of thought. So much of our popular literature is disgraced by

allusions of an improper kind; so many of our periodical prints contain articles which no respectable person ought to read to one of another sex, or even of his own, without a blush; and so loose are the notions of many who ought to set the highest example on this as well as other subjects, that the common rule of *silence* seems to need an occasional exception, and it becomes the pulpit and the press in a discreet and wise manner to lift up the warning voice. Happy would it be for any community, to be so free from temptations and transgressions against both the letter and the spirit of this commandment, that it might be passed by, even in such a series of discourses as the present. There is a natural delicacy in the human mind which shrinks from such discussions; and while all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, it might not follow that every passage should in turn be taken as a theme of public discourse. In such a community it would be enough that God's commands and warnings stand upon the sacred page, and the sensitive feelings of no heart need be jarred by allusions which it is creditable rather than otherwise, to an individual to hear with pain.

But such a community is not to be found; and

while I have never seen the propriety of some details of statements and expostulation, which many good men and women have judged it their duty to spread before the public,—yet the Christian and the philanthropist ought to let their influence be felt, and on proper occasions their voices should be heard, against this great, ruinous, and in one form or another, I fear, increasing evil.

Most of the plays, the novels, the poetry, and many of the newspapers of the day, are filled with allusions, to say nothing more, which tend to undermine in the heart of the young reader the precious foundations which the Fall seems to have left partly undisturbed, and on which as retained and consolidated, must be built all that is morally fair and useful. Sweep these away, and what have you left? What are honesty, and truth, and kindness, without delicacy of thought, purity of feeling, and modesty of deportment?

But let us not lose ourselves in a crowd, nor forget that this commandment, like all the rest, is addressed in the singular number to each person to whom a copy of the Bible has been sent: "*Thou* shalt not commit adultery." Now I have only to request each of my

hearers to remember this; to remember also what Christ says in the 15th chapter of Matthew, at the 27th and 28th verses, and to reflect on what those verses imply beyond their literal meaning; to bear in mind also that we pray or ought to pray, every day, "Lead us not into temptation," and to think what duties of caution that prayer implies; and finally, to remember every where and at all times, the solemn words of scripture, "Thou God seest me,"—implying too, Thou, God, hearest my words, Thou, God, knowest my thoughts. If all my hearers, from the oldest to the youngest, would give heed to these exhortations, I might hope that in this respect at least, they would come under that benediction of Christ, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

SERMON VIII.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20: 15.

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

"An exceedingly appropriate text for a penitentiary sermon," I hear some one exclaim. But my hearers, I should not waste my time or yours, by preaching from any text, though it *were* in the Bible, which was appropriate only to thieves and pickpockets.

Honesty, both as a matter of policy and duty, is, of all the virtues, most universally admitted and admired; but there is hardly one of the whole catalogue, which men are oftener and more plausibly tempted to transgress.

You all remember Christ's abstract of the moral law. His second division is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." There is one more indirect commentary from the same divine source. It is this: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the Prophets." These two passages have a direct and very intelligible bearing upon this commandment. It clearly falls within the second table of the moral law. Consequently, this abstract of, and commentary on, that table, are to be applied to it, and will help us to understand it.

The subject of property is one of great extent; and not easily, in all its branches, understood and explained. The Great Proprietor is God. By virtue of Creation, all things are His; for without Him was not any thing made that was made. Of the animate and the inanimate creation; of suns and planets, of comets and of worlds; of men and of angels; of bodies and of spirits; of time and of eternity; He is the maker and the owner. He possesses, both *of right* and *in fact*,—a su-

premacy of control, which in the hands of a being of less wisdom, or less benevolence, or less justice, would be the most tremendous and the most dangerous autocracy that the human mind can imagine. The tyranny, and the slavery, and the oppression, which exist among men, would be nothing,—absolutely *nothing*,—in comparison.

As it is, all is right and safe. The righteousness of God affords a pledge of justice and of safety to the universe, which no constitution, no balance of power could even most remotely approach, much less equal. And some of these various possessions, held both in right and in fact, by the almighty Proprietor, He has been pleased to commit to man, His only rational creature on earth.

Nor ought this *origin* of all human property to be lost sight of. It often is; and though we are but tenants, and in one sense, "tenants at will," of all that we hold, we imagine ourselves independent owners thereof, and in consequence neglect the returns which God expects, and quite overlook the responsibility, which under God's government, as well as man's, attaches to tenants and stew-

ards. "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me," said Jehovah by his prophet.

I have said we hold every thing at the will of God, because the time of our possession is fixed by God himself; we are only tenants at will, because we know not what a day may bring forth. Let us, then, my hearers, remember that our first duty, not of gratitude merely, but of honesty, we owe to God, who has given, or rather lent to us, both our bodies, our lives, and all our possessions, and who expects from us such a use of these things as He has prescribed. From this source originate the first and most important rights of property a man can have,—property in himself,—*personal* property in the strictest, and original sense of that phrase. Of these rights he can never be justly deprived, except as a punishment for transgressing certain laws under which he is placed. "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," are truly styled "certain *inalienable* rights." They are a part of the property entrusted by the Great Proprietor to man,—not in any associated possession,—but individually, singly. My person is my own; my life is my own; my liberty is my

own. He who takes them away against my consent, *steals* them. When I say against my consent, I refer to that implied consent which by living in society when I might live in solitude, I give, to the needful *regulations* of society. Though I am far from adopting the doctrine that government has *no* foundation but the express individual assent of the governed, yet I hold that any man who voluntarily remains in any community, does for the time being, assent to its laws, and that if in consequence of breaking those laws, he loses liberty, or even life, he has only himself to blame.

This applies neither to national oppression without justice, nor to involuntary servitude without crime. In these cases there is a breach of the eighth commandment, as well as sometimes of many others. Stealing *men* is no *less* a crime surely than stealing money. Depriving a man of his liberty, as does a kidnapper or a despot, is at least as great a sin against God's rules of property, as depriving him of his house or his land.

The eighth commandment does then forbid, primarily and peremptorily, all tyrannizing over, and all enslaving, of our fellow men, of whatever condition or color; because those acts

deprive human beings of the property which the Great Proprietor of all gave to them and not to us. No deed of inheritance or conveyance can sustain a despot's throne. No title can make good my claim to another's person. There is but one Being competent to make the conveyance, and He has never done it. Every man under God, *owns himself.* He has a *right* to himself. No other man can own him. I may lawfully be restrained, punished, and even executed, by just laws,—but I can never be *owned.* I can never be in the sight of Heaven, either serf or slave. I cannot sell myself; no other can sell me. The right to myself is no more alienable by myself than by another. God gave me myself to keep. So much for what I call, strictly, personal property.

And now we come to other objects; objects out of man's own self; objects either in themselves useful,—as the fruits of the earth; or indirectly useful,—as the materials for clothing, dwellings, and the like, and the fields and forests which produce them; or intrinsically worthless or nearly so,—as gold and silver and precious stones, but which have become conventionally the medium of trade and the representatives of all descriptions of property. All

these things compose wealth. They are what is commonly called property. And it is to the just and equitable use of this, that this commandment has its most obvious reference.

And here I must observe, that one standard of honesty has before our day, and to some extent *in* our day, been set up in the world, which neither the Bible in general, nor this part of it in particular, sanctions, and which most assuredly the Providence of God has most unequivocally disowned;—I mean the *standard of equality*. It has been supposed by some, that all accumulation of property on the part of individuals or bodies of men is sinful against God, and dishonest towards the remainder of the human race, each of whom, it is contended, has an equal right to an equal share of the property which exists. The rich are regarded as the enemies of God and man, deserving to be despoiled of all that they possess beyond a fair average of the good things there are in the world. Sometimes this principle has been acted out in violence and plunder; oftener it has operated silently, creating envy, jealousy, and hatred, between those different classes of society, the rich and the poor, from the very existence of which so many

of the virtues and kindnesses of social life have been seen to flow.

Now as to all this, however beautiful the idea of a universal equality may be on paper, or in one's own private imaginings, nothing can be more unequivocally reprobated by the whole course of God's Providence. If each man born into the world, had assigned to him by the Supreme Proprietor of all things a certain portion of the land, and other property in the world, together with equal facilities of location and other advantages to retain his share, and an equal talent and disposition for business, then it might indeed be obvious and sufficient evidence against a man's honesty, that he had doubled his share at the expense of one or more of his neighbors.

But when we consider that the foundation of these differences is laid by God himself, and that they depend upon a thousand circumstances not at all under man's control, it is plain that there may be private honesty and public justice, without an absolute and universal equality. Look at the differences in the place and condition of birth. One is born in a fertile country, where all the actual wants of man are supplied almost spontaneously; another among

barren hills, or on a rocky shore, where hunting or fishing, or at best a toilsome and precarious agriculture, must be resorted to, not for wealth, but for subsistence. I will say nothing of property or poverty inherited, because it may be said that such different inheritances could not have been witnessed, if the distinctions alleged to be unjust had not already been made in other ways. But I may refer to that difference of talent and of temperament, which would most infallibly and necessarily destroy equality, in a single week, even if it were forcibly established.

No! my hearers. When Christ said, "The poor ye have always with you," He recognized not merely an occasional fact in the condition of that community, but a fixed and unchanging principle in the economy of all human society. When He cautioned the rich against their besetting sins and dangers,—even going so far as to say it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven,—He evidently expected and knew that as there always had been rich men, there always would be. That it was not the fact of their being rich, but the sins into which their wealth might lead them, which

constituted the danger of their perdition, is made plain by the language of the apostle, I Timothy 6: 17—19; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

We are now prepared to regard mankind, as entrusted by their Creator with various possessions, promotive of their convenience and happiness. Of these things, or of most of them, He has never chosen to make a common undivided stock for the joint use of man, so far as we can gather both from His word and His Providence. One exception, and almost the only one, beside the air we breathe, is the ocean, which in all its parts, except a narrow border of a few leagues around each country bounded by it, is the open highway of nations, the undivided property of man. As to the original acquisition, by individuals and by nations, of various portions of the earth's surface, that essential element and foundation of all wealth, I shall not be expected to attempt

a minute discussion. Practically, we may conclude that possession is property, where no manifest injustice appears; and even then, the remedy is with the laws, where there are laws,—and they are every where, in some form or other. In any case, property however unjustly held by another, does not therefore belong to us, either in law or equity. And so our courts have justly decided that it is stealing, for individuals to take stolen or smuggled goods from the place, where, however wrongfully, they were secreted by their dishonest possessors.

The essence of dishonesty is; *the taking another's property without his voluntary and intelligent assent.* I say, *voluntary*, because a man who is robbed, often gives what may be called an involuntary assent, by delivering his money to save his life. And I say, *intelligent*,—because an idiot, or a maniac, may give away property which it is dishonesty in another to receive. So any man may sometimes through misapprehension, give or sell what he did not intend to part with, or for a consideration which he never designed to accept. If I buy a barren, rocky hill, which I know to contain a hidden treasure, as for instance a gold mine, for a mere trifle, because of the owner's ignorance of

that which I know, I have no honest title to my purchase, because I have not the *intelligent* assent of the owner.

Assuming, therefore, the definition of dishonesty above given, to be correct, let us inquire for some of the practical bearings of the eighth commandment, and endeavor to ascertain the strict and spiritual rule of scriptural, Christian, honesty.

And here I cannot forbear to quote again from the language of those venerable fathers in the church, who have given us so full and in general so judicious a commentary upon Christian doctrine in this as in other matters. They say in the larger Catechism: "The duties required in the eighth commandment are truth, faithfulness and justice, in contracts and commerce, between man and man; rendering to every one his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgment, will, and affections, concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose, those things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our

condition; a lawful calling, and diligence in it; frugality; avoiding unnecessary law-suits and suretyship, or other like engagements; and an endeavor by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further, the wealth and outward estate of others as well as our own.

The sins forbidden in the Eighth Commandment are said to be, "beside the neglect of the duties required, theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving any thing that is stolen; fraudulent dealing; false weights and measures; removing landmarks; injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; oppression, extortion, usury, bribery, vexatious law-suits, unjust enclosures, and depopulations; engrossing commodities to enhance the price, unlawful callings, and all other unjust ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness, inordinate bringing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies, in getting, keeping and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise idleness, prodigality, wasteful gaming, and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate and

defraud ourselves of the due use and comfort of that outward estate which God hath given us."

We find in these statements repeated reference to the duties we owe ourselves, and those dependant on us; duties doubtless in accordance with the spirit of this commandment, though not included in its letter. Thus the apostle says: "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." Those who framed the above answers seem to have regarded the eighth commandment as an abstract of all the scripture doctrine on the subject of property.

All this, as you have doubtless already reflected, bears hard upon many customs of trade and business. And yet, would it not be difficult to show any of these specifications to be out of place? In what particular would a man who truly loved his neighbor as himself, and actually did to others as he would that they should do to him, depart from these rules? Do not let us say that this would prove too much; that it would excuse ourselves by showing that all men are guilty. Common custom, and the force of insensible and unreflecting habit, may

doubtless palliate to a certain extent, though it can never wholly excuse, the wrong conduct of those who have the Bible in their hands, and a conscience within their breasts. But if it be true, that "the times of ignorance God winked at," it is also true that there are times when He "calleth on all men every where to repent." Such a time is that, when our duty and our error are brought to our knowledge and remembrance. If we, my hearers, have heretofore insensibly, and therefore with some degree of palliation, infringed upon the outermost limits of that law of love to our neighbor which forbids us to further our own interests at the expense of his, that palliation will cease to exist from this moment, when we are distinctly reminded of our duty towards him as well as towards ourselves.

Nor let it be said that such a view of the eighth commandment would wholly preclude the possibility of trade. These principles, acted out, might indeed somewhat change the course of trade; they might render its gains in some cases less rapid; but they would be more sure; for the game of over-reaching, is one "that two can play at;" and very often, rapid gain by taking advantage of another's ignorance

is followed by as rapid losses, through our own ignorance or inadvertence. Nor would it even be true that all trade would necessarily be of this moderate kind, and all its gains gradual. Changes in markets might occur, from a variety of causes, which would prevent the trader from being confined to the simple profits that should remunerate his daily toil. And while it is by no means certain, that any come quite up to the scripture standard in this matter, do not many amass wealth by a regular and conscientious traffic, much faster than they could do by mere manual labor, thus using,—what many *abuse*,—their talent for business.

However this may be, we may at least conclude, that no trade can in the end be a real blessing, to a community or to individuals, which a just and proper construction of the law of God, would prevent. And as to the subject of markets, those who best know how they are regulated and changed, can best understand me when I say that there is great danger and temptation at this point. If I regulate the market by deception, and thus gain an exorbitant return for my commodities, how much better is it than gaining my neighbor's property by any other species of deceit? Just imagine an

angel over-reaching a brother angel in this way! Or the apostle Paul to have sold Peter some food or raiment at an advanced price, because of its scarcity, when he well knew a large supply was on the way, which would by the next day put it in his brother's power to buy at half the price! The case, I need not say, is different, when both parties possess equal information, and agree to await the consequences of mutual risk. But all trade founded on deception, all gain received without the voluntary and intelligent consent of the other party, must be set down as contrary to the spirit of the eighth commandment.

An important topic to be considered and understood, in connexion with this subject, is that of losses suffered by others through our indebtedness to them, which we have not the means of discharging. It is a clear point, that misfortune is not a crime, though it is too often thus regarded and treated by the laws, as witness the barbarous custom of imprisonment for debt without fraud. Such a statute is a disgrace to any code; yet it is suffered to pollute the pages of many statute-books from which God's just and eternal law of capital punishment is attempted to be erased.

Still, two things are to be considered. One is, that to incur debts which we have no reasonable prospect of paying, is not compatible with duty, either to God or man; the other, that the creditor should know what our prospect is, and thus be able to trust us not only *voluntarily* but *intelligently*,—at least that we give him no false statement, no wrong impression. When against our reasonable hopes and strict endeavors, misfortune and ruin have overtaken us, either through fire, or shipwreck, or the dishonesty of others, or the fallibility of our own judgment, it only remains, that with no fraud or concealment, we should seek, so far as possible, to repair the losses we have occasioned to others.

In doing this, we are not obliged to starve ourselves; for the unfortunate as well as the prosperous have a right to a living in the world; and our settled and honest purpose for ultimate remuneration may require some legal defence against the rapacity or revenge of individual creditors. But the idea of wealthy bankruptcy is assuredly condemned by every principle of justice and of equity. As to legal releases, and subsequent full remuneration, I will only say, that in the millennium, if there should be trade and misfortunes then, it will probably be a less

uncommon, and a less admired occurrence, for a man to perform such an act of extra-legal justice, than it now is.

I have said nothing concerning the gross and literal offences against the eighth commandment, —and yet perhaps I ought. There may be individuals here who have been, or who may be, tempted to *steal*. Some of these children may be tempted to take a school-fellow's book or toy. Some of these youth may be tempted,— how many well educated youths have been,— to relieve a want, or to gratify an appetite, by the commission of theft.

Oh, my young friends, start back with horror from the first, the slightest, offence. Once begin, and you know not where you will end. It was but last week that I was called to visit in a gloomy cell of yonder prison, a young man, but a little while since respectable and happy, now disgraced and wretched. Could you have seen him in his shame and misery, and heard his bitter regrets, uttered with a trembling voice, you would feel the force of God's words when He says, "Thou shalt not steal," and "The way of transgressors is hard." I cannot forbear to add, that needless expenses for amusements, for decorations of dress, for deli-

cacies of food, and for stimulating drinks and other useless and hurtful indulgences, have in many cases brought young persons to disgrace and ruin. If children and youth would avoid the effect, let them avoid the cause; and all juvenile dishonesty so far I have observed, has sprung from other vicious or extravagant habits.

Thus, my hearers, I have endeavored to give you an outline of the scripture teachings on the subject of honesty. It has, I am aware, been but little more than an outline. Perhaps you expected a more minute detail. But specific rules of conduct can hardly be given, and if given, would not in all cases be safe guides. I doubt not there is much of the essence of dishonesty under a legal, and even an *honest* guise; and on the other hand a pure and honest intention may assume to one ignorant of business, an unfavorable aspect. The latter case, however, is more rare. While that which appears right, may often be wrong, that which appears wrong, can very seldom be right.

I regard the whole subject of justice between man and man, as one of the highest practical importance. And I earnestly wish, that some qualified writer,—and in order to be qualified, he must be, or have been, an intelligent Chris-

tian merchant or man of business,—would produce a work which should be a book of reference for cases of conscience, and which should gradually and silently work those changes in some business habits, which high Christian morality seems imperiously to demand.

I fear that in most transactions, from the petty traffic of boyhood, up to manly bargains, and even national compacts and boundary questions, there is too little of doing as we would be done by,—too little of loving our neighbor as ourselves. The law of God, concerning honesty, although somewhat general, yet with the aid of a quick and well instructed conscience, will be a sufficient guide.

Above all, let us remember that our Creator has claims upon us, which we can neither honestly, nor gratefully, nor safely, refuse to admit and to satisfy. And while He commands us to give to every man his due, His language to us is: "My son, give ME *thy heart.*" He asks no more. He will accept no less. Let us not defraud Him of this just right, lest He say to us as He did to the Jews, "Ye have robbed Me."

SERMON IX.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20: 16.

THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOR.

This commandment, though not always so understood, is intended to forbid every species of falsehood. The resemblance of a part of its language to that which is applied to testimony given in courts of justice, has led to the impression that it is directed only against judicial perjury; while the phrase, "against thy neighbor," has seemed to limit its meaning still farther, leaving it to apply only to the crime of slander; as if it were designed only to prohibit a sin against our neighbor's reputation, like those

sins against his life and his property, which the sixth and the eighth commandments forbid.

Such is undoubtedly one main bearing of this command; and yet there are several reasons for understanding it, as was said above, to contain a prohibition of all falsehood. Otherwise, there is no statute in the Decalogue directed against a crime, which the history of the world shows to be one of the most common, and which the Bible elsewhere represents as one of the most heinous, of human transgressions. As to the phrase "against our neighbor," it should be recollected that all our communications are with our neighbors, that is, our fellow men, and that every sin against truth is therefore a sin, more or less direct and aggravated, against them.

The following extended definition given by the Westminster Assembly, though very minute and comprehensive, is not, then, I think more so, than the spirit of the command warrants.

"The duties required in the ninth commandment, are, the preserving and promoting of the truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor as well as our own; appearing and standing for, and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly and fully speaking the

truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report concerning them; discouraging tale-bearers, flatterers and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth, keeping of lawful promises, studying and practising of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely and of good report."

"The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment, are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors as well as our own, especially in public Judicature, giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, outfacing and overbearing the truth, passing unjust sentence, calling evil good and good evil, rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked; forgery, concealing the

truth; undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions to the prejudice of truth or justice, speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, tale-bearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring, misconstruing intentions, words and actions, flattering, vain-glorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others, denying the gifts and graces of God, aggravating smaller faults, hiding, excusing or extenuating of sins when called to a free confession, unnecessary discovering of infirmities, raising false rumors, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defence, evil suspicion, envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavoring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy, scornful contempt, fond admiration, breach of lawful promises, neglecting such things as are of good report, and practising or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name."

Considering the ninth commandment as a prohibition of all falsehood, and of that falsehood especially, which injures our neighbor's good name, let us inquire for a moment into the foundation of this law.

I have had occasion more than once in these discourses, to refer to the distinction between those duties which become such only by God's appointment, and of which natural conscience takes no cognizance, and those which are so connected with the welfare of men, and so written on their hearts, that they cannot be mistaken.

The duty of veracity is of the latter class. Abstractly considered, it might appear to belong to the other. But such is the nature and extent of human intercommunication, that veracity is never an abstraction. The great principles of natural justice require every man to "speak the truth to his neighbor;" and falsehood is universally felt to be wrong, except when conscience is so nearly dead that even theft and murder cease to cause remorse.

And no other crime against either God or man is more universal, in its extent among all classes of society, both in heathen and in christian lands. Travellers have told us of nations

where truth as a virtue is wholly unknown; travellers, too, who could hardly be suspected of entertaining us with that particular branch of falsehood, appropriately styled, "travellers' wonders," which so often and so well illustrate the prevalence of this sin.

With all writers on ethics, I shall consider the essence of falsehood to consist in *an intention to deceive*. It matters not that this intention is or is not acted out, or that the deception is designed or accomplished in one mode or another. The consequences may differ. The degrees of guilt, too, may vary; as we may suppose a man wicked enough to *intend* a crime which conscience holds him back from perpetrating, that is, which he is not wicked enough to commit. Where, however, the act of deception is done or attempted to be done, the *mode* is a matter of little consequence,—we may say none at all,—as to the degree of guilt. A written, or a silent lie, may be no less sinful than a spoken one.

The question is often asked, "Is it ever right to deceive?" One principal case of doubt to which the inquiry refers, is that of an idiot or madman, whether made such by

intoxication or other cause, either permanent or temporary. Such deception as may be necessary for his own safety or that of others, has been commonly, and I think rightly defended, on the ground that being for the time at least, without mind, he is in a moral respect beyond the limits of the rational community, and may be restrained and guided as the irrational creation may properly be, by stratagem and guile, if no other mode presents itself. It should, however, be remembered, that in this sense as well as others, honesty is the best policy; and that such frauds, when repeated, often lose their power; a truth sadly illustrated by the unjustifiable attempts often made by parents to deceive their children in respect to taking medicine or doing other irksome things.

Another case is that of enemies, robbers, and murderers, from whom we have occasion to defend ourselves. Questions often occur, respecting duty under such circumstances, which are of great practical importance, demanding instant decision, and extremely difficult to settle. As to war, so long as it shall exist to curse the world, it is obviously desirable that it should be carried on in a mode as consistent with humanity and truth

as possible. As to cases in which life or property is put at hazard by individual violence, it is difficult to conceive of an obligation to a pirate or murderer, to tell him the truth, so strong as the law of self-preservation. And while great caution should be exercised in judging in such cases, and great care taken to avoid lowering the standard of duty in our own conscience,—which would be a far greater evil than loss of property,—yet with reference to such cases we cannot, I think, safely say that it is *never* right to deceive.

Another class of practical questions relate to secrets which others have no right to know, and which it would be impossible to disclose without leaving some impression different from the actual truth. Here, the old maxim, "the truth should not be spoken at all times" has a real,—though it should be a very guarded, application.

After all, these doubtful cases are comparatively of rare occurrence, and a well instructed and well kept conscience will seldom find difficulty in making a right and a prompt decision. And as to these apparent exceptions to the rule of strict and uniform veracity, they should be regarded as *only* apparent. It is not that false-

hood becomes right, in such cases, but that something which would be falsehood under other circumstances, becomes a justifiable reservation. Who would call it an act of falsehood to deceive and entrap a wild beast? And wherein differs from this, the act by which I mislead a furious maniac, or an imbruted drunkard, and thus save his life or my own?

These apparent exceptions, too, as was said above, are extremely rare. They need not be kept in view or anticipated. Men have lived and died without finding them. And it is only because I wish to present a thorough view, at least an entire outline, of this important subject of veracity, that I have alluded to them at all. In this as well as other things, the best rule is, to do right, and trust God with the consequences.

Let us now briefly notice some of the more prominent classes of falsehoods against which it becomes us all to guard, as lovers of truth, and as the subjects of a God of truth, who will exclude from His holy kingdom whatsoever "maketh a lie." And here I cannot but refer you, for a more full and minute discussion of the subject, to the admirable work of Mrs.

Opie, who has given us in her "Illustrations of lying," an almost faultless manual of truth.

I. The first form of falsehood I shall mention is *Perjury*. This is the uttering of known untruths under the solemnity of an oath or affirmation. It differs from other falsehood chiefly in that it is more deliberate. The imprecation of the Divine displeasure in case of perjury can hardly be supposed to add to the certainty that that displeasure will be felt and expressed. But the crime itself would be the greater, when committed with that ample opportunity for reflection, and after that appeal to the sentiments of duty and the fear of God, which every public administration of an oath should afford.

And here let me say that I have often been struck with what has appeared to me a most serious evil, in the mode of procedure in this matter in courts of justice. The hasty and irreverent manner in which the form is repeated by the officer, in many cases to young or ignorant witnesses, and often to several at once, is fitted to shock every serious listener, and to frustrate all the designs of this grave and time-honored solemnity. If a kind and serious word of instruction and caution were uttered by the Judge, and then the formula repeated by the

proper officer in a slow and reverent manner, to each witness or juror separately, cases of perjury would be less frequent, and the dignity which should surround every judicial tribunal would be better preserved.

While upon the subject of courts, let me observe, too, that jurors, as well as witnesses, should "fear an oath,"—and that the cases of compromise, or of yielding to the opinion of others, which are so common, are hardly consistent with the solemn engagements of every juror to be guided by his own judgment. May I be allowed still farther to suggest, that counsel,—surrounded as they are by the solemnities of an oath, though not themselves sworn, ought to be extremely careful, lest in their zeal for their clients, they unconsciously take the place of witnesses, declaring their firm belief as individuals, of what perhaps seems extremely doubtful to all others, and afterwards even to themselves. The opinion of a well known lawyer, deliberately and solemnly expressed, would go even farther than the testimony of some witnesses, in influencing a jury. But no counsel is under obligation to become a witness as well as advocate, especially to contradict by a gra-

tuitous declaration his own secret convictions of truth.

II. Next to false oaths I place *false promises.* These may be either deliberate or careless. They relate to almost every interest of human life, involving much injustice, both fraudulent and unintentional, and leading to miscalculations and disappointments which have done much to embitter society. I will specify only that class of false promises which relate to the accomplishment of work or the discharge of pecuniary engagements, which the promiser knows, or may know, it will not be in his power to fulfil. Such promises are often made by persons in almost every occupation, with the intention of securing employment; but nothing can more thoroughly displease any man than to be disappointed in this manner. Interest and duty combine to demand of every man of business, whether of a mechanical, commercial or professional kind, to be punctual in fulfilling his engagements, and to promise nothing but what he can perform.

III. I next mention *false signs.* Suppose a traveller, on the approach of a dark night, applies to you for information respecting two roads, one of which leads to a neighboring city, and the other will plunge him into a dense and danger-

ous forest. You designedly send him in the wrong direction. He perishes. Does it matter as to your guilt, whether you accomplish the act of deception by words or by signs?—by an inclination of the head, or pointing with the hand?—Plainly not. And what shall we say, on this principle, of those false marks upon goods, and the other numerous devices both in trade and in the intercourse of society, by which wrong impressions are designedly communicated?

IV. Let us next notice *false declarations.* These are of many kinds, and uttered with various motives. Sometimes they are spoken carelessly, with no settled purpose of deception, except so far as to produce a temporary impression upon the mind of the hearer. This is the case with what have been called "falsehoods of exaggeration." They spring from the love of the marvellous, so strongly implanted in the human heart. Some men, especially, seem to look on things in the manner it has been imagined that the brute creation, through some peculiarity in the structure of the visual organs, look on man,—as greatly magnified. They would not for their lives deceive you as to any important matter; and yet they never give you

a literal description or a right impression of any event they undertake to relate. There are other exaggerations even less pardonable; when men to enjoy the surprise of others, purposely deal in the declaration of wonders that never occurred. But in whatever form it appears, exaggeration is always evil. Practised as it is almost unconsciously, by some good men, it injures their influence, and has sometimes almost destroyed their character for veracity.

Other false declarations are made in civility, taking the form of compliments, untrue expressions of regard, and the like, by which the moral tone of society is weakened and great injury done in many ways. False statements, too, of a more delicate kind, for the sake of gain, or vanity, or malice, come under this general head. And some persons seem to be impelled by a love for lying, to utter what may be termed gratuitous falsehoods, a form of depravity happily rare in enlightened states of society.

Having thus endeavored to present, not so much a description, as a bare catalogue, of the various species of falsehoods, which in the work already referred to you will find drawn out at

greater length and admirably illustrated, I proceed to a few closing remarks.

1. Falsehood, in all its forms, is one of the most detestable sins which are forbidden by God, or committed by man. This is true, whether we estimate it by the light of scripture, or of conscience, or of its history in the world. "All liars," we are expressly assured, "shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

Whatsoever "maketh a lie," is also mentioned in the list of what is to be excluded from the holy city of God. The moral sense, too, brands falsehood as a crime; and while one ancient nation made deception and concealment a virtue, and punished their children not for stealing, but for suffering themselves to be detected, this was only another evidence that they disobeyed the "law written in their hearts," and not that this unwritten law was unrevealed to them.

And then the *effects* of lying; how have they filled the earth! Well is Satan called the father of lies. The progeny is worthy of the sire. Blot falsehood and its consequences from the history of the world, and you leave it a comparatively peaceful and pleasant tale. May

God hasten the time when "every man shall speak the truth with his neighbor." To this end, I remark in the next place,

2. Parents, guardians, and teachers cannot be too solicitous to check the tendency to falsehood, at its earliest appearance in the young. On this point many parents are extremely remiss. Their whole system of management is in substance like that of the Spartans just alluded to. They first set the child a pernicious example, by their carelessly uttered and soon forgotten threats and promises,—not forgotten by the child,—and then by punishing him less promptly and severely for lying than for any other fault, in effect offer a bounty upon falsehood, and as it were bribe him to imitate their own evil habits.

A teacher once informed me that she had a pupil remarkable for her want of veracity. As the child had respectable parents, and had evidently been in many particulars well brought up, this strange "lying spirit" was a great mystery to the teacher. One evening during a visit to the child's mother, the mystery was explained. The child was unwilling to leave the room at her usual hour for sleep, alleging her wish to see her teacher longer. The

mother assured her that the teacher would leave directly, well knowing that in so saying she uttered a falsehood. The child then consented to go; but awaking during the evening, and crying, she was pacified by another false assurance from her mother, that the teacher was gone.

This was overheard by the latter, who from that time pursued a course by which the child soon became as to all her school deportment, a pattern of veracity. This course was no other than to punish her for no fault which was frankly confessed. With such examples at home, however, a thorough reformation could not be expected.

3. My third remark relates to the specific branch of falsehood mentioned in the text. I mean slander. Sins against reputation are exceedingly common, and are, if I mistake not, the parents of much other falsehood. It is much to be regretted that *persons* form so large a part of the material for conversation. The saying of the wise man, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin," is peculiarly applicable to words uttered concerning character. Is there not "a more excellent way" for the conducting of social intercourse than to devote so much

time to the discussion of the character and doings of others? The old classical maxim, "Nothing but good should be spoken of the dead," may also well be applied to the *absent*. No one who has observed the course of conversation when such is its material, needs to be told that more evil than good,— often more falsehood than truth,—is uttered. Let us be careful how in any way, and to any extent, we "bear false witness against our neighbor."

4. Let me entreat those who have hitherto preserved a habit of strict veracity, to prize it very highly, and to guard against every temptation to infringe upon the truth, even in the slightest degree.

> "Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
> When first we venture to deceive."

In a course of untruth, like all other evil courses, it is easy to go forward, and difficult to retreat. Avoid even the appearance of evil. Avoid the beginnings of evil. And may God make you all, followers of truth, as well as of every thing else lovely and of good report.

One thought more, and I have done. The text forbids our lying unto men. An apostle

said to Ananias, "Thou has not lied unto men, but unto God." Have we vowed unto the Lord? Have we promised Him our love and service? Have we sealed such promises at His table? Have we uttered thanks, and expressed resolutions, to Him? Let us remember that though He cannot be deceived, yet the crime and the punishment of an *attempt* at deceiving God, as well as men, may be incurred. From both the one and the other may the God of Truth preserve us.

SERMON X.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS 20 : 17.

THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE, THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE, NOR HIS MAN-SERVANT, NOR HIS MAID-SERVANT, NOR HIS OX, NOR HIS ASS, NOR ANY THING THAT IS THY NEIGHBOR'S.

The heart of man is a world of desire. If the object of his wishes be worthy of his dignity and destiny, the strength of desire cannot be excessive. Who ever too strongly wished for the blessing of forgiveness from God? Who ever panted too eagerly to become a partaker of the divine nature? Who ever inordinately desired a treasure in Heaven?

But if the object of desire be unlawful, or if a lawful object be extravagantly and unduly desired, then comes perversion and waste. Against this double evil, this last statute of the holy Decalogue is designed to forewarn and restrain us. "Thou shalt not covet,"—then follow specifications, and then the sweeping clause: "Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbor's." Here is both a positive and a relative duty enjoined; a sin against ourselves and our God, and also one against our neighbor, forbidden.

Let us look at each point separately.

The letter of the Tenth Commandment has respect to our neighbors, that is our fellowmen's property, of whatever kind, and particularly forbids our coveting it or any part of it. To covet, is strongly to desire. By this is meant more than a simple wish. Such a wish, for what we have not, may or may not be sinful, according to its degree or its object. A man may desire an increase of his property, without having a covetous, or even a discontented heart. A man may wish that he possessed a certain house, or farm, or ship, belonging to his neighbor, and may endeavor to obtain it, by the offer of a fair equivalent, without in an unlawful sense covet-

ing that object. Such wishes and such endeavors are the elements of all trade and commerce, and when regulated by honesty and benevolence and moderation, they are neither unlawful nor hurtful. But to look with envy on what our neighbor has,—to desire strongly to make it our own, even against what we know to be his interest and inclination, is to covet it. This feeling, though not always leading to dishonesty, is always the chief element in a dishonest character. Why should I take that which belongs to my neighbor, if I did not first desire to possess it? If there were no coveting there would be no stealing.

And this should be a motive to every honest man, who wishes to die an honest man, to beware of covetousness. That usurious oppressor who grinds the faces of the poor; that skilful bargain-maker, who ingeniously contrives to avoid conviction, perhaps even suspicion, as a dishonest man; that fraudulent dealer, who avoids nothing but the state's-prison; and that convict, upon whom these several classes of his brethren look down as beneath their pity;—each began his career with a simple desire for something which belonged to his neighbor; in other words, with a slight, and as it may have seemed

to him, insignificant, breach of the tenth commandment.

Nay more, the essence of his present guilt lies not in the taking, but in the desiring to have; for the taking, without a desire, would be but an unintentional act, and therefore without blame.

But as I have spoken of fraud and swindling and theft, let none imagine that because they are guiltless of these, they have kept the tenth commandment from their youth up. Though a man cannot be dishonest without being covetous, he may covet without dishonesty; he may break the tenth commandment without transgressing the eighth.

He who allows himself to compare his neighbor's possessions with his own, and to dwell much in his thoughts upon that by which God has distinguished others above himself, is guilty of the sin of coveting. He transgresses the great law of brotherhood, by obedience to which without envy or grudging, men would rejoice in each other's welfare; even while patiently bearing their own calamities.

It is true, the poor may innocently desire the aid of the rich, as a child might seek the assistance of a stronger or more fortunate brother;

for it is a part of the law of brotherhood, that we should bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

It is also true, as in substance observed before, that we may desire each other's possessions on terms mutually advantageous or supposed to be so, as children of the same family may without envy or fraud make changes in the occupancy of their toys or other juvenile possessions. The rich man might even desire and obtain that one little lamb of his neighbor, by the touching story of which the prophet so eloquently rebuked the sinning monarch, provided this transfer were made with mutual consent and to mutual advantage.

But what if a child, forgetting or undervaluing either the nature or number of the good things given him by his father, should look with sullen envy, and with secret desires, and perhaps *designs*, of possession at those which belong to his brother. O! how entirely, how flagrantly, how offensively to God does every covetous desire for the good things possessed by another, transgress both the spirit and the letter of that divine and comprehensive command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

I have spoken of covetousness as the parent of fraud; let me now speak of discontent as the parent of covetousness. To be dissatisfied with what we have, is to desire something which we have not; and as most things which we have not are in the possession of our fellow men, there is but a step between desiring what is not our own and coveting what is another's. Nor is this all. God, as was observed in a former discourse, is the great Proprietor of all things. It cannot be a less, though a different sin, inordinately to desire what He withholds, than eagerly to covet what another of his creatures, by his gift, possesses. The Bible speaks of robbing God; and we may certainly imagine such a thing as *coveting* from him.

Covetousness, therefore, whether towards God or our fellow men, is but the child of discontent. The Creator holds in his own hands, or at least withholds from his creatures, certain blessings, such as, at particular times, health, or rain, or sunshine. Other blessings, such as houses and lands, and gold and silver, He has seen fit to bestow on others and not on ourselves. Discontented with these allotments, we vainly and eagerly wish for what we have

not. Does not this involve the sins both of ingratitude and rebellion.

But what is discontent? Is it to be aware of the poverty or other calamities of our condition? Is it to feel keenly the sharp stings of sorrow, which God sends to pierce our hearts that they may be made better? Is it to desire and pray that our burdens may be lightened and our lot made easier? No. The diseased may long and pray for health, the calumniated and disgraced may sigh for the blessing of a lost and precious reputation. The poor man, surrounded by a dependent family, may desire and labor that he may have a provision for their future and increasing wants.

But with all these lawful wishes, these strenuous endeavors, and these fervent prayers, there must be gratitude and submission; gratitude for what we have, and submission under the absence of what we have not.

There must be no secret murmuring against God; no envy expressed or unexpressed towards our fellow men; no cherished habit of comparing their prosperity with our adversity, their wealth with our moderate competence or poverty, their blessings with our trials.

There must be no allowed castle building in the air, with the materials out of which it has pleased God to construct the earthly destiny, not of ourselves, but of others.

That contented mind, which is a continual feast, must dwell within us, or we shall, involuntarily perhaps, but not innocently, come inordinately to desire, first another lot, and then the lot of another; the former a sin against God, the latter against our fellow men. And though it be easier to admire contentment than to possess it, yet how does it commend itself, not only as a duty to every man's conscience, but to his heart as a blessing without price.

It should be remembered that discontent can never alter our lot; since it is the course of divine wisdom to give us not what we wish, but what we want; that is, what He on the whole judges to be most conducive to our highest good. We have reason also to reflect that we have more blessings and fewer trials than we deserve; that many others have a harder lot than ourselves; and that in proportion as wealth or happiness is denied, in the same proportion is the dreadful chance diminished of our having all our good things in this life.

There is moreover no condition which contentment may not make endurable; while the highest measure of wealth or prosperity, with a discontented temper may but serve to illustrate the homely maxim, "the more man has the more he wants."

My hearers, will you study contentment? It is not an art to be learned in a day; it demands the labor of a life; but unlike most other objects of desire, its cost can never exceed its value.

There is one kind of covetousness which the Bible not only permits, but enjoins. The apostle Paul has said, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." Contentment is certainly one of them. I pray God, you may all have it. God is willing to bestow it. Your having it will leave none the less for others. And yet it is not a common possession, far less common than wealth, and less common, I fear, even than that rare jewel piety itself; and yet, "*a discontented christian!*" what a phrase! what a thought! Is it, my hearers, a phantom of my own imagination? Would to God it were. For if there were no discontented Christians there would be no covetous, unhappy, worldly minded Christians; fewer inconsistent, useless

Christians ; and fewer through the false lights of their examples, mere nominal, deceived, castaway Christians.

But how difficult to be contented! how difficult to know whether we are contented! So that man found it, who on hearing that a fortune had heen offered to any man who was perfectly satisfied with his present condition, immediately applied for himself. The answer he received was this: "If you are satisfied with what you have, why ask for more?" How easy to say or even to think that we are contented,—how difficult and how rare to be so!

Thus, my hearers, I have endeavored to unfold the elements of the sin of covetousness. I have endeavored to show you where the roots of this noxious tree, springing in the fertile soil of an ungrateful heart, and nurtured by the tears of a discontented spirit, send upwards the unsightly trunk, and the poisonous sap, which shall bear all manner of fruit except that which is good. Envy, hatred, avarice, fraud, violence, and even murder itself, have all sprung from it.

Like the fabulous poison tree of Java, it diffuses sterility and death around it. The earth, which it overshadows, brings forth nothing useful ; and even those birds of heaven,

sweet messengers from God, Faith, Hope, and Charity, with all good thoughts and holy feelings, alight not and scarcely hover near it.

Of its fruits, which are also its marks and evidences, I cannot attempt to give a detailed catalogue. But that the force of the subject may not lose itself in generalities, we will look at a few of them.

1. I first mention avarice. This is a mean, sordid love of gain, for its own sake. It is the crime and curse of the miser. It is often confounded with the sin of coveting, and men because they love not gold for its own sake,—because they never knew the luxury of counting guineas by lamp light,—have supposed themselves clear from all violations of the tenth commandment.

Avarice, however, is neither the root, nor the trunk, of the tree of covetousness; it is but a topmost branch, or rather a rare and monstrous fruit, of that tree. And yet it never comes from any other source. No discontented, covetous, worldly minded man has any security against the dreadful day that should find him a miser.

Of all idolatries, of all crimes against God, and against the life and image of God in the

soul of man, this, if not the greatest, is the meanest. Of all the gods of this world the golden god is most senseless and contemptible. He has eyes, but he sees not; ears has he but he hears not; a nose has he, but he smells not; neither speaks he through his throat. And yet his image and superscription on a coin or a bank note, or set forth to the diseased eye of the miser, on the walls of his houses or the surface of his lands, is adored with a fervor and constancy, which should shame the Christian's intermitted and lukewarm devotions.

I trust that in none of my hearers, the love of gain has yet taken the form of avarice.

I would rather see even reckless enterprise, rash adventure, extravagant prodigality, the highest indulgence in the pride of life, ruinous as these things are, than to know that you had become base idolaters of gold, seeking to have for the sake of having, and mortifying the appetites of the flesh, to gratify this mean and morbid and inamiable appetite of the spirit. But if there are to be,—which may Heaven forbid,—misers among those whom I address, I know full well that they will come from those who now least regard the spirit of the tenth commandment.

2. Another consequence and symptom of covetousness is the making haste to be rich. This is done in various ways, and with various ostensible motives. There are, too, various degrees of haste; all of which, however, in different proportions, illustrate the old saying, that "haste makes waste;" waste always of comfort,—sometimes of conscience and a good name—and often, in the end, of the very wealth which is its object.

Among the most pernicious of those means by which men make haste to be rich, are the lottery, the card table, the billiard room, and the various contrivances classed under the general head of gaming,—contrivances which have beggared more men, and ruined more souls, than any other of Satan's devices. Like so many burning glasses they collect and concentrate the scattered rays of this passion,—the love of gain,—till it consumes the very soul. They take out the heart of a man from their victim and their dupe, and put within him the heart of a gambler.

Another form of making haste to be rich, less glaring in its evil nature and tendencies than the last, and therefore more easily beguiling wise and even pious men, is that of specu-

lation in stocks and houses and lands, when sudden changes in the nominal value, not dependant on the real value, and therefore not to be calculated on with certainty, present all the hope, and awaken all the excitement, and produce nearly all the evils of a vast lottery.

Another class of men, enterprising, honest and discreet, who rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, giving their days to toil and their nights to calculation, little dream, that it is an inordinate and hurtful desire of gain, by which they are actuated.

They suppose that it is the voice of duty, duty to themselves, or to their families, or to some public enterprise, or it may be to the treasury of the Lord; which is bidding them thus to sacrifice health, comfort, mental improvement, and social enjoyments and duties in the family, upon the altar of mammon. They make haste to be rich, while death is making haste to overtake them. They are not content with such things as they have, or with moderately and steadily adding to those things. They, too, should be fearful lest covetousness which is idolatry, should, before they are aware, weave its meshes around their hearts. The green withes by which Sampson was bound

were not stronger. And it will be well for them if the grace of God shall ever impart a strength greater than Sampson's to rend those bonds asunder.

3. Another fruit and evidence of covetousness is envy towards those whose condition in life is superior to our own. Love of the world is not confined to those who have most of the world to love. I may value the wealth of my neighbor more highly than he does. I may desire to obtain it, more strongly than he desires to keep it, or to add to it. If I do so, I am the worldly minded, covetous, man, though all my gains and my hopes should be on the smallest possible scale. The beggar may curse in his heart the pride of the prince, when the prince, if he had the beggar's heart, would be a thousand fold more proud than he now is.

Men as often look upwards as downwards, to this object of their adoration, and covetousness is no respecter of persons or of conditions. Let the poor as well as the rich beware of covetousness; and let us all remember that to grudge others what we have not, is no less sinful than to be proud and idolatrous of what we have.

My hearers, I have thus imperfectly spread before you the great sin of covetousness. I have endeavored to show you its root, its branches, and some of its fruits. I have called it a great sin. The Bible declares it to be idolatry. It is against both God and our neighbor. It injures ourselves. It is the parent of hatred and fraud and violence. Most of the quarrels, and wars, and usurpations, and outrages, which have disgraced humanity, have sprung from it. Slavery is one of its children. It is the sin of the whole world. The ancients and the moderns, the civilized and the barbarous, have alike contended more for property than for fame or any other object. This is the principal subject of litigation,—it leads to the principal forms and instances of crime.

Strange that rational men could have found nothing better to contend for, to *sin* for, and to ruin their souls for, than the perishing objects of a perishing world,—its houses and lands with their equivalents and representatives,—yet so it has been; so it is; so it will be, till the time when with holiness shall come wisdom to a world of perverted and enfeebled minds.

It is, I remark again, the sin of this country. We are making haste to be rich; often, it is

true, with little success. And yet, one disappointment serves but to lure the mind on to another endeavor. What a rage for new schemes!—what a rush to the lands of promise which like so many eldorados rise to view! What postponement of literary, social, and religious advantages,—and even of health, to the prospect of gain. See our Southern cities filled,—our Northern prairies covered, with swarms of men and women and children, who hardly sighed to leave behind them the schools, the churches, the social habits, the refinements and comforts of New-England, so that they might become wealthy; as if a man's life consisted in the abundance of things which he possesseth!

It is a sin, too, of the church; perhaps her great sin. She, like one fabled of old, has slackened in the race of godliness, that she might gather the golden apples which one more subtle than any of the heathen gods, has thrown in her way.

Yes, with Heaven in view, and crowns of glory waiting for her, she has turned aside to join in the base scramble for the things which will disappear when the Christians all shall be safe. Sad, disgraceful scene! Bitter

have been its results. Already is the church needing the advent of Him whose fan is in His hand, who will thoroughly purge the threshing floor, and gather the wheat into his garner, but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. "Ye cannot," Christ says, "serve God and Mammon." Would to Heaven multitudes had known and remembered this, who have strangely and fatally forgotten it.

Some flatter themselves that all is well, because their gains are designed for the Lord's treasury. But alas! too often wealth freezes instead of warming the heart of its possessor; closes, instead of opening his hands. Not always. And yet the Christian's prayer should be that of Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Oh, how many places of secret prayer would have been kept open which are now closed, perhaps forever, if this prayer had been offered and granted!

Since this is the sin of the world, the country and the church,—each should repent of, and forsake it. And as I have said that one kind of coveting is permitted and enjoined in the Bible, let me also remind you of one inspired direction how to be rich. It is this:—"God-

liness with contentment is great gain." Let us in this suppose "that gain is godliness."

That great unanswered question; "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" reminds us that covetousness may defeat its own end. The treasure in Heaven is not lightly to be despised. To have died in affluence, and to be buried in splendor will not relieve the deep poverty of the soul's eternal bankruptcy. It is better to lose the whole world and save the soul, than to gain the whole world at the expense of the soul's loss. "May God preserve us from "covetousness which is idolatry," and give us all the true riches, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON XI.

THE WEAKNESS OF THE LAW, AND THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

ROMANS 8 : 3, 4.

FOR WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO, IN THAT IT WAS WEAK THROUGH THE FLESH, GOD SENDING HIS OWN SON IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH, AND FOR SIN, CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH; THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.

"The Law is holy; and the Commandment holy, and just, and good." So the Great Lawgiver has asserted. So the very nature of the case declares. So the law itself makes manifest, even on so slight an examination of its several statutes, as we have lately undertaken.

Not a whisper, in God's intelligent universe, has ever been heard, questioning either its holiness, its justice, or its beneficent tendencies, except it may have been from that portion of the universe probably least qualified to judge of its merits. I mean the human race.

And while even with ignorant and sinful man, such objections have been matter of feeling rather than of opinion, it may be presumed that in that only other sinful community of which we have any knowledge, a higher degree of intelligence has prevented even such a thought from arising. So that there is neither a spirit lost, nor a spirit blest, but acknowledges that the commandment is holy, and just, and good; nor one who is ready to make objection against that vast united praise which magnifies the glorious Lawgiver as the "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty."

Such is the Law. Like the Legislator, it is perfect, wanting nothing. Yet there are some things it could not do. At least, there is one thing,—as our text clearly intimates. This is not of necessity any disparagement to the law; since if any created object answers one end, or whatever number of ends it was expressly de-

signed to answer nothing more can justly be demanded.

The Law was intended for a rule of duty; and as such it is perfect. No mariner over a trackless sea, was ever guided by the compass and the stars more directly and safely to his destined port, than would the Law, if strictly obeyed, have guided man to holiness and to Heaven.

But as the compass and the stars neither amend the defects of the vessel, nor compel the mariner wisely to follow their leading; so does not the Law, however holy and wise and good, turn men into machines, and oblige them to obey it, or diminish by one iota that voluntariness of choice and action, which will forever remain, unchanged both by depravity and sanctification, by probation and reward.

There are many things, therefore, which the Law cannot do. It can never any more than the ceremonial Law,—to use the language of the apostle,—"make the comers thereunto perfect." It has not made the fallen angels so, though it was revealed to them in its fullest glory and clearness. Nor is it that which has made the holy angels so.

To say that it has no such tendency, would be saying more than we know or have reason

to think. To say that it has not, and of itself *cannot*, produce this result, is but to say that this part of Jehovah's designs is to be answered by other agencies.

The Law is simply a statement of the will of God, with accompanying promises and threats, to obedience on the one hand, and disobedience on the other. As far as a desire to please Him, or a wish to secure His favor, or avoid His displeasure, may be in any case sufficient motives to obedience, so far the Law has a tendency to make men holy. But these, alas, avail little against the torrents of sinful passion, and the love of those things which are seen and temporal.

The Law, then, cannot make any of its subjects perfect; nor can it justify or save them without perfection. No law is designed for the benefit of those who transgress it. The friendly guide of the ignorant and hesitating, it becomes an object of terror to the disobedient; as we may imagine the pillar of fire which guided the wandering Israelites to have been the identical flame which afterwards broke forth in the rebellious camp, to the alarm and destruction of those who had forgotten their leader and their Lord.

Good and virtuous men rejoice in those human laws, which at once regulate their own consent, and afford them security against the wickedness of others. While the criminal himself, though he may respect the law, and even admit its justice in the punishment it inflicts upon him, must *as* a criminal, look elsewhere for hope and pardon. A law which should at once forbid crime, and secure impunity to the criminal, would nullify itself; frustrate its own ends; and be rather an encouragement than a preventive of what it forbids.

Those then who depend upon the law, are debtors to the *whole* law. "He that keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all;" that is, he is under the condemning and punitive power of the law considered as a whole, though not in the same degree of aggravation, as if he had broken all its statutes. So says both reason and scripture.

If the law can neither make its subjects perfect, nor save them from the consequences of their transgression, it follows that another of its impossibilities is, *the justifying and saving of a single soul of Adam's race.*

That no one has ever perfectly obeyed the commands of God, I shall not attempt elabor-

ately to show. The declaration of scripture that there is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not, is too clearly and universally confirmed, by the experience and confessions of mankind, to be misunderstood or denied.

Among all the expressions which pride, and error, and ignorance, have brought to my ears, I have never yet heard the plea of absolute undeviating perfection. I have heard many men express a sentiment very different from that of the apostle when he said, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified;" I have heard many declare their full expectation of being received to Heaven, because they were honest, and industrious, and humane,—in short, on the very grounds upon which the young man stood, to whom Christ said, "One thing thou lackest." But I never found a man who would deliberately say, that he had never done wrong; who would considerately aver, that from his youth up, he had loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. Yet no other degree of obedience is perfect; no other can entitle us to acquittal; no other can save us, on the simple ground of law, from

whatever consequences the Law may attach to transgression.

I have said that no man claims for himself the character of absolute and undeviating perfection from his youth up; in other words, that all, when the question is deliberately put, are ready to plead guilty to the charge of having to some extent transgressed the strict and spiritual commands of God. It may be said further, that the notion of being "saved by morality," so often found to exist, is rather an impression, or a bare and indistinct hope, than an opinion. It belongs to the heart rather than to the understanding.

Accordingly, when such an impression is communicated either from the Pulpit or the Press, it is not so much by what is said as by what is not said. It is rather by omission than by argument that any preacher or writer, unless he teaches that all men will be saved, can minister to the comfort of those who desire to be soothed with the hope of being saved without piety towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, difficult to point out the passage, either in a discourse or in a book, in which the doctrine of salvation by good works is taught; while yet is clearly, though nega-

tively, implied, and thousands are led, if not to believe it, yet to adopt it, to rest their souls upon it, and, it is greatly to be feared, to lose their souls by it.

Yet who can prove it? Who can deliberately assert it, or trust to it, with the Bible in his hands to tell him what the law requires, and a conscience within his breast to assure him that in ten thousand ways he has broken its holy commands? True it is, that every mouth is stopped and the whole world become guilty before God. If salvation could come only "by the Law," then indeed were it better for man that he had never been born; and the long probation of the human race would but have increased the fearfulness of their account, without providing for their safety.

It is very plain, then, what it was which the "Law could not do." It is equally plain, *why* it could not do this. The Law was weak, not through any inherent defect, not through any mistake on the part of its Framer, not in any way dishonorable, either to Him or to itself. Our text explains the whole. "It was weak through the weakness of the flesh,"—sinful flesh, as the next clause tells us. Here is the sad and fatal defect; here the dreadful secret of the Law's impotence.

If it had been obeyed, it would have been strong; strong to save and bless the race of man, as was the ark, to bear above the waters of the flood the survivors of the old world, who were to be the progenitors of the new; strong as the ship in which Jonah embarked that he might flee from his God, but which would not long have held together, amidst the fury of the winds and waves, which had been summoned by the Lord of the elements to terrify and punish the fugitive.

Nor let it be said, that the law was less a blessing to man, than to other beings,—more powerless to do him good, than to bless and save other orders of creation.

It was too weak to save the sinning angels; and it was not its strength that preserved the holy ones.

If it be asked, why different laws were not given to different races, or their hearts constituted with the same tendencies, and a certainty of the same ultimate character and destiny,—I reply: To suppose the giving more than one law, would be to suppose two standards of right with two divine characters as their bases; and as to the original character of the human race, all such questions as I have supposed above, imply a presumptuous spirit, to which the

answer of the apostle is highly appropriate ;— "Nay, but O man! who art thou that repliest against God?" Such an objection would come with a better grace from our lips, if we were conscious of having done all in our power to counteract whatever evil tendencies our hearts since the fall have possessed. However God has made us, one thing is certain, that we have ruined ourselves.

It is enough for us to know, and of that I trust the recent series of discourses on the Commandments has convinced or reminded us, that *as we are*, the Law is too weak to save us ; that whatever it might and would have done for us, if we had obeyed it, it can do nothing for us now, but to condemn us.

But I forget myself. Blessed be God, that there is one thing more it can do. It can be "our schoolmaster to bring us to CHRIST." The flames of Sinai may light us, and its voices of terror may drive us, to the hill Calvary. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh ; that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

We see, then, that while it was, in a certain sense, God's will, to justify and save sinners. The Law could not do this. It was weak; not the weakness of imperfection, but the weakness consequent upon a design and adaptation to another end. So the gentle breeze is too weak to prostrate the oaks of the forest; and the earthquake and the tornado have no power to fertilize the earth, or to refresh at evening its tired and heated cultivators. Still, this which the law could not do, God had determined should be done. Consequently means were not wanting for its accomplishment.

And what were they? Hear O Heavens! and be astonished O Earth! God sent his own Son. What,—I hear it asked,—that Son who shared his glory before the world was? That Son who said, "I and my Father are one?" That Son who was called the Word, which "Word was God?" That Son to whom the Father said, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever?"

Yes, the same. There is no other Son of God. He is not only the well beloved, but the only begotten. And He was sent. He whom the angels adored; He whom the saints will praise in a new song, in that world where but

to breathe a human or an angelic name, as an object of adoration, would be to send confusion through all Heaven's perfect harmony.

Yes, He was sent. He came, who "was in the form of God;" He took on him not the nature of angels, but the likeness of flesh,—yes, even of sinful flesh,—though himself without sin, that living and suffering for sin, he might condemn sin *in the flesh*.

Well might the apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness, GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH. And here, the mystery is explained. Not explained in such a way as to prevent the pride of intellect from saying, "How can these things be?" and yet so explained, that the Christian need no longer ask in doubt and fear, "How can God be just, and yet justify me who am a sinner?"

We have seen, then, what the law could not do; why it could not do it; that God determined it should be done; and that He sent his dear and equal Son, for its accomplishment.

But how, the question next arises, was it, after all, to *be* done? By what efforts on the part of him who came with the full and generous intention to spare no *needful* effort, was this great problem of justification and salvation

which the law had failed to work out, to be solved ?

Not, I answer, by the simple fact of the Incarnation. That Christ "came in the flesh," was indeed a proof of infinite condescension. Yet God had been manifest before. Though "no man hath seen the Father at any time," yet we are told that God "talked with Moses," and showed him a part of His glory ; and the angel of the Covenant so often spoken of in the old Testament, as God Himself, was doubtless but the borrowed human form, in which the second person in the Holy Trinity thus early chose to visit the world, into which as the child of a virgin, he was afterwards to be born.

But these advents, these temporary manifestations of God on earth, did not, and could not, take away sin. Nor was it the holiness, the obedience, the perfect example, the divine teaching, or the instructive martyrdom, of the Son of God, which accomplished the great work left undone by the Law.

To suppose that they could, or did, would be entirely to overlook the nature of this legal impossibility. What the law could not effect, was, as we have already seen, the justification of those who had already broken it. And how

was this to be accomplished by example, or instruction, or martyrdom?

You may love and pity a criminal condemned by the laws. You may visit him in his gloomy cell. You may exhibit before him the purest morality. You may inculcate upon his mind the wisest lessons of virtue. You may even illustrate to his view the power of truth, by dying under his prison walls a martyr to your principles. But does all this change his guilt? or alter the verdict? or mitigate the sentence? or unlock the doors of his prison? So far from it, that it has not even *the remotest tendency* to this end. And if such things had been all which Christ was able to offer or to do for us, we might still have exclaimed in fear and despair. "Who, then, can be saved?"

But at this point of doubt and fear, there comes to the aid of our wondering minds, and to the joy of our despairing hearts, the great Scripture doctrine of the Atonement.

That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that He bore those sins in his own body on the tree; that by his blood He has made propitiation for us; that, in short, He is the great antetype of the sacrificial types, the substance of the shadows, of the old dis-

pensation, without which, they were but the signs of nothing, shadows without a substance; all this, which the Bible teaches us with more repetition, perhaps, than it teaches any thing else, and which the whole Church, with so few exceptions, both in ancient and modern times, has relied upon as the very corner stone of Christianity, shows us as plainly, as in our present imperfect state we can understand, HOW it was, that Christ did, what the law could not do.

Here, too, we perceive the grand reason for the Incarnation; that the nature which had sinned might also suffer.

It was indeed, as an apostle tells us, *for the suffering of death*, that Christ became a little lower than the angels; since an angelic nature could not have died. It was in the flesh, as our text assures us, that sin must be condemned. It was "*in his own body*," assumed for the very purpose, that he bore our sins. It was "*upon the tree*," that he must be lifted up, that he might draw men unto Him.

Behold then, my hearers, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. Remember that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission. Call to mind the apostle's declaration that it was impossible for

the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin; and be thankful, that, as the same apostle tells us, Christ by his *own* blood entered in once to the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Can language be plainer?

And now let us next observe, with what strictness Jehovah guards the holy temple of human accountableness, where conscience sits enshrined. Lest any should say, "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound;" lest the sufficient and free Atonement of Christ, like the ocean in abundance, and like the atmosphere in gratuitousness, should operate as a bounty upon the transgression which it was designed in part to prevent, as well as to atone for; we find its offers universally coupled with certain requisitions binding upon those who would avail themselves of it. Let us hear the concluding words of our text, "that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

We cannot gain a more distinct and comprehensive view of the Scripture doctrine, respecting the way in which Christ's work is made available in individual cases, and respecting the possibility and danger of His having died, as to

ourselves, in vain, than by a reference to the verses immediately following our text.

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace: because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but

ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

How entirely does all this both disprove the doctrine, and repel the cavil, that the death of Christ has provided salvation for all men, or for *any* irrespective of character. As a doctrine, it has been held by few. As a cavil, it has been more often urged, than almost any other, against the claims of Evangelical religion, But the doctrine is no less unscriptural than the cavil is unjust.

Those who believe in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, as the sinner's only ground of hope, consider it no more possible for a man to be saved without morality, than do those who expect to be saved by morality; while above and beyond the external and often heartless morality of this world, they find the Scriptures requiring a holy heart, a spiritual life, a godly conversation, a likeness to Christ, in all who hope to be justified by his merits, and saved by his grace.

And here it is important to notice one point of excellence in the Gospel, which is often overlooked. We have seen that one thing which the Law could not do, namely, to justify and save the transgressors, the Gospel has done.

There is another thing, which the Law was neither able nor designed to do, but which the Cross has accomplished.

Its powerful motives, with the influences of the Divine Spirit which its agonies purchased, and the dying Saviour bequeathed, have power to sanctify as well as to justify. And while the Law, as we have already seen, had *no* power, either to prevent transgression, or to avert its consequences, the Gospel does both.

From the influence as well as the guilt of sin, the Cross can release the penitent and believing. And though even under the Gospel, there is not a just man on earth, that doeth good and sinneth not, it is still true, that he who hath this hope, "purifieth himself."

Thus the false and wicked suggestion, "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound," not only meets its hearty "God forbid," from the lips of every true Christian, but affords internal and irresistible evidence, that the heart

which prompts it has never been baptized with the blood of Christ, and has never shared in the blessings of his atonement.

> "When from the curse He sets us free,
> He makes our natures clean;
> Nor would He send his Son, to be
> The minister of sin."

The first reflection that arises from this subject, has respect to the duty of self-examination. In furnishing a test by which we may learn whether we have yet any share in the salvation purchased by the blood of Christ, it strongly reminds us of the importance of using that test.

Do *we*, my hearers, "walk after the Spirit?" Have we spiritual thoughts and feelings? Have we spiritual joys, and hopes, and fears? Is our conversation spiritual? Have we any thing to do with a spiritual world, and with spiritual duties? Have we any communion with God, who is a Spirit? Or, are we carnally, that is, worldly, minded, walking after the flesh, and minding the things of the flesh?

These are the points, my hearers, on which, as on so many hinges, the whole question of our union to Christ must turn.

It is not mere profession; for to many of his professed disciples, Christ will one day say, "Depart from ME, I know you not."

It is not morality merely; for to one of the most moral men, according to his own uncontradicted statement, that ever lived, Christ said, "One thing thou lackest."

To be *spiritually minded* is life and peace; and, if any man have not *the spirit of Christ*, he is none of His.

Again. If the Law cannot save us, none but Christ *can*. If what the Law could not do, could have been more cheaply or easily done, (it could not surely have been done at any greater expense,) then Christ had never *thus* accomplished it. There was no other Saviour. There remaineth no more sacrifice. That no imperfect obedience can justify and save man, the Bible clearly shows. That no one of us has ever rendered a perfect obedience, we need not the Bible to convince us. That there is no third method of pardon, is beyond a doubt. Consequently, unless Christ saves us, we are lost.

My hearers, blot out the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ, from the pages of the Bible, and you consign with ruthless

hand, the entire race of sinful man to destruction. Deny that we may be justified by faith in his blood, and you teach, unconsciously, but inevitably, the doctrine of universal damnation. Take away the atonement, and you may take the rest of the Bible. For its empty covers, would be, I would not say, as *useful*, but certainly as *consoling*, as Sinai without Calvary; as a Gospel without a Saviour.

When you hold up before me these tables of testimony, on which are engraven by the finger of God the words of his holy and unchangeable Law, O point me with the other hand to the Cross on which was written with human hands, yet by the mind and will of God, that other word, "JESUS." For what said the angel more than thirty years before? "Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall *save* his people from their sins."

Blessed word! Thanks to the Heaven directed obstinacy of Pilate; who though he honored not the Victim with the title of the Son of God, was yet not moved by the clamor of the Jews, to change the inscription. "What I have written," said he, "I have written." It shall not be forgotten. It shall stand written

upon the memory of the world, and upon the heart of the Church, till Christ's second coming.

What thanks do we owe to God, for this unspeakable gift,—the Gospel of Salvation. May it not become, to any who hear me, of none effect, through their unbelief. May God in His mercy forbid that any of us should add to the guilt of transgressing the Law, the greater and more irreparable sin of neglecting the Gospel.

My highest wish will be accomplished, and my most fervent prayer respecting these discourses, answered if that Law whose several Statutes I have thus attempted to explain and apply, and by which we must all feel condemned, shall be, to use again the expressive words of an apostle, "our Schoolmaster to bring us to Christ."

THE END.

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